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This document contains 10 papers on vocational education and training and related research that were developed for a 1998 European research report titled "Training for a Changing Society." The following papers are included: "Research on Transition" (B. Clasquin, F. Gerardin, V. Toresse); "Objectives, Realisation and Organisation of Continuing Vocational Education and Training" (Dieter Munk, Antonius Lipsmeier); "Training and Employment Opportunities for Disadvantaged Persons" (Ides Nicaise, Joost Bollens); "Curriculum Development, New Learning Environments and Transfer of Innovations in Europe" (Pekka Kamarainen, Jan Streumer); "New Learning Formats and Venues in the Context of Information and Communication Technologies" (Gerald A. Straka, Markus Stockl); "Validation and Recognition of Non-Formal Learning: The Question of Validity, Reliability and Legitimacy" (Jens Bjornavold); "Theory and Methodology of International Comparisons" (Uwe Lauterbach, Wolfgang Mitter); "Transnational Mobility in the Context of Vocational Education and Training in Europe" (Soren Kristensen); "Migrants in the European Union: Some Empirical Findings" (Pascaline Descy, Manfred Tessaring); and "Recognition of Certificates and Transparency of Skills in the European Union" (Burkart Sellin). (MN)

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Background report 1998

Volume II

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Vocational education and training – the European research field

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RESEARCH ON TRANSITION

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(GREE-CNRS-CA/CÈREQ-Université Nancy 2)

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1. INTRODUCTION

"*Countries are experiencing an increase in the level of unemployment amongst young people and a lengthening of the transition between school and work. They are all developing increasingly sophisticated and complex schemes to influence training systems, handle unemployment and to organise and monitor this transition phase*" (Lhotel/Romain 1996). This observation, coupled with the use of the concept of "transition", seems to be common within the European Community both in the national monographs and in international comparisons themselves. However, it would nevertheless be wrong to conclude from the common language used so far that the concept of transition is perfectly stable and that the analyses about transition are a subject of great consensus throughout the European Community in each of its Member States. This is far from being the case.

Given the persistence of a very high degree of heterogeneity in the problems, definitions and methods used to analyse transition, we have prepared this report with a two-fold goal: firstly to clarify as far as possible the situation by recording progress and difficulties in research undertaken on the issue of transition and, in this work, to suggest possible areas of reflection concerning opportunities to undertake more in-depth research on this subject from a comparative European perspective. The three parts of this report reflect this two-fold goal.

The first part is not strictly comparative. It documents French experience in the development and interpretations up to now of the problems of organising occupational transition proposed at the beginning of the 1980s. This then leads to proposals for adapting this problem which are also the basis for its in-depth examination from a comparative angle. It should be stressed that this is something which had initially been proposed fifteen years ago but which could only really gain ground at the beginning of this decade. Against this background we can state that it is essential for this problem to reflect to a greater degree the important role of the education system and, more particularly, of its vocational strand in the preparation and shaping of transition from the educational system to the world of work. There also has to be more in-depth analysis of the interaction between the players and groups concerned on levels other than political circles and governmental institutions responsible for the integration of young people.

The second part follows on from the proposals in the first part concerning the role of vocational training systems in the transition of individuals to work. From the very outset this is done from the comparative European angle. In the existing comparisons which have to do with educational systems and also more specifically with occupational transition from school to labour, it explores the possibilities and difficulties for reconciling these two types of research and the value for the analysis of transition of examining during this transitional phase specific periods in individuals' lives and the characteristics of their path within educational systems.

The third part also reflects the first by using European comparisons to examine the different approaches to transition which are encountered and which could serve as points of reference for developing the analysis of the organisation of transition towards the world of work in areas such as national monographs or transnational comparisons. This study is conducted with the underlying idea of the need to undertake international comparison of transition by drawing on a more sophisticated societal approach than the one which has been used so far of the players and groups of transition in far more decentralised and local environments.

2. THE PROBLEM OF ORGANISING OCCUPATIONAL TRANSITION: FOUNDATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF WORK CONDUCTED IN FRANCE

2.1 The genesis of a new problem

2.1.1 Its prolegomena

At the beginning of the 1980s, Rose presented a thesis entitled "*Contribution to the analysis of social forms of access: occupational organisation*" (1982). This subject was re-examined soon after in a study entitled "*Searching for employment: training, unemployment, employment*"

(Rose 1984). This marked the beginning of research on the organisation of occupational transition in France. There were two goals: to undertake a stocktaking of socio-economic research on the occupational integration of young people and to examine the ability of theories to explain the concrete phenomena of distributing labour and, more particularly, the forms of access for young people to employment in a period of major social transformation such as the emergence of youth unemployment. At the time several studies on integration and youth adopted highly controversial stances and the analyses did not always take account of real and observable trends.

2.1.1.1 Occupational integration

At that time much research on integration adopted a very restrictive point of view (integration reduced to initial integration, differences in integration interpreted only on the basis of individual factors, integration considered as a linear and neutral mechanism for balancing training and employment) as well as a solely theoretical basis (proposed by Vincens in 1979 which stemmed from the theory of job search). This[1] inevitably led to very standardised analyses of integration which were incapable of viewing integration both as a social and procedural construct.

A detailed examination of the real conditions for the integration of young people made it possible to formulate three criticisms of their most common interpretation at that time:

a) The specific features of young people do not explain everything (the characteristics generally attributed to young people were only particular to some young people);

b) The responsibility of the educational system for "the imbalance" and the difficulties of integration was less obvious than it seemed (there was not a larger number of young people than before entering the labour market, young people better trained than others, non-exclusive discrimination by training of access to work);

c) The role of companies was essential in order to understand the different forms of access to employment (more particularly, the selective nature of their recruitment and mobility policies and the magnitude of difference between the sectors and in company size).

Since there was no real integration theory, this approach involved viewing integration as another form of mobility, of tackling various areas and of reconciling the economic behaviour of companies, institutions and individuals.

2.1.1.2 Young people

Use of the term "young people" was often tantamount to confirming the singularity and, at the same time, the homogeneity of this category. However, many empirical studies have already revealed major internal distinctions and similarities with other groups. Although some singularities were obvious (lack of work experience, specific constraints in terms of reproduction linked to maintaining family co-habitation), it could already be shown that these singularities took on specific and very different forms depending on the groups concerned, their social and school background and their lifestyle. All of a sudden it was difficult to identify qualities held by all young people which were different from those attributed to adults. Hence, the risk of naturalising the category "young people" meant neglecting the historical and social conditions of entering employment and, in the final instance, of not being able to interpret the clear differences in the integration of young people.

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[1] Exclusively micro-economic foundation underestimating the importance of institutions and companies involved in integration, maintaining a neo-classic analytical approach to the labour market (independence supply-demand), denying the structuring role of demand by companies and the existence of an institutionalised process of integration outside the market, postulating voluntary unemployment which was, however, contradicted by the rhythm and chronology of youth unemployment during the crisis etc.

2.1.2 Establishment of the research subject

In order to interpret the conditions of integration, an analysis was proposed of all the strategies used by the players involved. The social forms of organisation of the passage to employment and the socio-economic processes for distributing labour were advanced as determining factors in that the labour movements of labour could not be viewed exclusively from the angle of the labour market nor could they be viewed independently of the ways in which the workforce was used. This approach also stressed two structural elements of integration which were often under-estimated: the policies of companies and the policies of institutions.

2.1.2.1 Hypotheses about the structuring role of the policies of companies and institutions

Three hypotheses were formulated which were inspired by work on the segmentation of the labour market (Doeringer/Piore 1971);

a) Labour movements were first to be interpreted from the angle of their destination (status obtained, employment and company in which integration took place);

b) The differences in recruitment and use of the workforce between companies were "functional" (since this role varied from company to company, this justified a distinction between segments in terms of work conditions and types of groups involved and, by extension, identification of the diversity of integration conditions);

c) Institutions played a structuring role in respect of external markets in the same way that companies structured internal markets (hence the increasing role during the crisis of social players responsible for integration and for young people as well as that of public authorities).

2.1.2.2 Definition of the research subject: OOT

Finally, a definition of the specific research subject was proposed "*organisation of occupational transition*" (OOT). The term "transition" signifies "that there was a passage, an intermediate state of a certain length, subject to the influence of the former situation and influencing the future situation in a more or less narrow, constrained and definite manner" and the concept of OOT had to do with "*all the mechanisms and processes which affected this transition process*" (Rose 1984).

OOT was defined as "*all the social forms which involved putting people out of work to work* (whether this means) *entering a concrete work process* (integration into a specific work unit with concrete tasks and precise social links), *or the passage to an activity* (whether it be the first or not, whether it involved obtaining a job or interim unemployment) or *entering salaried employment* (assumption of special occupational and social status marked by a specific link to work, remuneration, mobility)" (Rose 1984).

It should be pointed out that alongside this definition, the "*forms of transition*" (situated between the individuals and companies and having a direct effect or not on the path to employment) and "*the players in transition*" (more organised forms such as placement bodies, training-integration systems and state incentives) were a separate group and that *transition* was viewed as a *process* which was both *special* (existence of relatively clear periods in the life of individuals, gradual change in the status of employment), *long* (not always clearly identifiable), *complex* (entanglement of employment status, unemployment status, of professional and social components and of schemes preparing for employment), *selective* (growth in the proportion of people compared with young people) and *socially organised* (by public authorities and various institutions).

2.1.3 The first field results

Three major results were obtained from the first field work on OOT.

2.1.3.1 Occupational transition is first organised by public authorities

Their involvement was very varied (drop in the costs of the workforce, improvements in training, regulation of flow, assumption of social costs for those excluded) depending on the way in which they viewed the source of their unemployment and the difficulties for young people in accessing employment. This essential role of the social forms of organisation of access to employment was as follows:

a) the real weight of the external market (far greater than had been thought before) structured the movements of the workforce and the relative importance of each form of recruitment depending on the characteristics of the individuals and the companies concerned;

b) the role of the people involved in transition (ANPE [National Employment Agency], training bodies, placement institutions) was growing. What seemed to be very different schemes did in fact pursue a similar approach and divided work up on that basis;

c) the role of training-integration systems and various financial incentives changed the conditions of occupational transition. This became more diversified and grew from its modest beginnings;

d) and gradually established itself during the 20th century and continued to constitute a system for socialised, selective and fluctuating placements at the mercy of social conflict;

e) the weight of the public authorities increased who had gradually set up a real policy for occupational transition which was substantial and was considerably influenced by employer strategies.

2.1.3.2 Companies play an essential role in OOT

Young people were under-represented in some jobs, some occupations and in some specific sectors. Companies made selective use of people in transition. One specific side of the production system was, therefore, involved in the ways in which this transition was organised. This was characterised by the size of the companies (small and medium-sized), the sector (labour intensive companies in specific sectors, mainly services sectors), type of job (mainly low-skilled, transversal jobs) and position on the labour market (dominant companies).

This, therefore, confirmed the discrimination of young people and the impact of each of the variables (level of external recruitment, scale and degree of concentration, characteristics of the workforce). It also confirmed the existence of management policies for human resources by means of which companies were given useful support by external placement agents (outsourcing, selection schemes, means of improving the skills of the workforce).

2.1.3.3 The OOT "schemes" fulfilled two main functions

If we examine the observed effects of OOT schemes in terms of the groups affected, employment conditions and remuneration, training given and professional future, this reveals that they fulfilled a two-fold objective.

a) Differentiated management of workforce movements. OOT proved to be a means of categorising groups and promoting flexibility in the workforce in various ways: recruitment assistance for the least able companies in terms of pre-selecting labour and reducing management and mobility costs, by stressing mobility and the precarious nature of occupational situations by means of giving official status to and disseminating insecure jobs, as global management of unemployment by limiting its volume and its selectivity and by assisting the group concerned, all this aiming to keep both the phenomenon and its effects within socially acceptable limits.

b) A transformation in the training process characterised by two main aspects: far closer links between periods and sites for the preparation and use of qualifications which was demonstrated in the growing role of companies in training and, on the other, in the extension of qualifications to take in all technical and behavioural elements.

2.2 Interpretations of the issue of OOT

2.2.1 The intrinsic beginnings of theoretical and empirical interpretations

By demonstrating that the theoretical model which was prevalent on the labour market was based on independence and the strictly mercantile adjustment of supply and demand was unable to explain the phenomena observed in the access to employment[2] and that almost all economic and social analyses of occupational integration reduced this to first-time integration and did not interpret it as part of the model of the above-mentioned labour market, the OOT issue pegged out new paths for reflection on the organisation and functioning of the labour market.

2.2.1.1 Ways of extending the segmentation theories

Most of the hypotheses formulated about this problem were inspired by less orthodox theories of segmentation[3]. Support for these theories was not unqualified. One question raised was the formulation of the hypothesis that institutions played a structuring role in respect of external markets in the same way that companies structured internal markets. In other words, in the same way that no internal market could be viable without a minimum of social provisions for management, the external labour markets could not be untouched by the trajectories between defined social situations and employment, or social forms of management.

By challenging this under-estimation of the importance of external markets compared with internal markets in the segmentation theories, the OOT issue implicitly raised the question of the link between the construction of internal markets and the social management of external markets, whilst at the same time reaffirming not only their relative autonomy but also the special nature of each of the two types of management. In other words, the commercial sphere (external markets) and non-commercial sphere (internal markets) were both perceived, albeit in a different manner in their specific field, as having four social forms and provisions for management, the common element being the structuring effect of the production system. In this context, more in-depth analysis was suggested in respect of work on segmentation along the lines of the forms of social organisation of external markets and, more specifically, the social provisions and forms of handling the mobility of the workforce on these markets as well as the links between these forms of management of external markets and the construction, even reproduction of internal labour markets.

2.2.1.2 New elements of reflection on the metamorphoses of the salaried employment situation

Re-examination of the work on segmentation was also linked to re-examination of the theory of the salaried employment situation. By showing that "occupational transition" was first organised by public authorities, whilst also demonstrating that it was influenced by company policies on the one hand, by calling for extended analysis of the forms of social organisation of mobility on the external labour markets and their links to the construction of internal markets on the other, the issue of OOT called for more detailed analyses of the developments of the way in which workforce mobility was handled during the crisis. In this context it was part of the overall reflection on changes in the salaried employment situation undertaken by and in conjunction with the French school of regulation.

The first results did pinpoint the institutional forms of organisation of mobility which led, on the one hand, to the progressive dismantling of a form of registration in salaried employment and a link to employment generally described as "Ford like", and, on the other, to a whole network of new regulatory configurations in regulation which involved acceptance of qualifications. The centres of gravity shifted towards employment, (towards the tertiary sector, SMEs), the "French model" changed the links between the educational and production systems and there was differentiated management of mobility involving a call for/rejection of the workforce and complex mechanisms of dualisation and exclusion.

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[2] Everything pointed in the direction of the concrete absence of a competitive and perfect labour market

[3] Lack of independence in the structures of supply and demand, asymmetry in supply and demand with a predominance of the role of companies. Company structuring of internal markets, abandoning of the job approach for an approach based on forms of access to jobs

OOT seemed to be one of the forms for developing and restructuring salary links in a period of crisis. This was particularly the case because it involved all the components of salaried employment put forward in the theory of regulation whether it be mobilisation (transformation of the conditions for the acquisition of know-how, shift in the respective role of specialised bodies and companies in this field), maintenance (challenging of remuneration modalities by transition schemes simultaneously trying out a reduction in the level of the resources and a passing on of the costs to public authorities) or use of the workforce (contribution to the setting up of new forms of organisation of work groups).

2.2.1.3 Setting up a research programme

OOT was envisaged as an initial stage which should eventually lead to examination of "*all of the movements of the workforce, taking into account all the components involved in the organisation of movements of access to jobs (...) to analyse the history and role of all the agents of integration, to understand their dependencies, to reposition them in general economic changes and thus to better interpret all movements on the external market*"[4] (Rose 1984).

These suggestions coupled with the theoretical questions mentioned above led to a joint contribution to a work entitled "*The unidentifiable link between training and employment: the research situation in France*" (Tanguy et al. 1986). This, in turn, led to the proposal of a research programme on OOT with the following priorities:

- to place the subject of "occupational transition" in a wider theoretical framework;
- to consider that occupational transition was just one form of labour movements and thus to call for an analysis of external markets and different mobilities;
- to focus in the analysis on the agents of integration by examining the way in which they structure transition;
- to no longer treat occupational transition as a homogeneous phenomenon but rather to seek out the criteria which constitute the differences;
- finally, in terms of interpretation, to look at different types of approach whether they are historical (linked to the crisis, development of salaried employment), comparative (national differentiation) or macro-social.

2.2.2 Developments in this issue within GREE

These developments were achieved by gradually extending and applying the issue of OOT to various groups. This progressively shifted the subject of the initial problem of youth transition to the social conditions of those who were out of work and led to a more global analysis of the social forms of occupational mobility.

2.2.2.1 Work on young people

A certain amount of research addressed the special groups of young people and special transition schemes introduced by the public authorities in France. Three types of work in particular led to a rethinking of the initial issue of OOT.

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[4] This is what Boyer thinks by stressing the interest "*in international comparisons which explain the convergence and also the differences between institutions, economic mechanisms and social determining factors governing occupational transition*" (in the preface by Rose 1984)

a) Research about young people aged between 16 and 18 (Rose, Méhaut, Monaco, Poret, De Chassey, 1982-1984). Beginning with a socio-historical analysis of the development of overall legal, collective bargaining and institutional measures which laid down at each step the shape of social organisation of the access of young people to work it re-examined three essential dimensions in the theoretical and social debate at the beginning of the 1980s in France: reintegration into the school system, transition and social integration.

   Three of these conclusions were of relevance to the initial issue of OOT. Firstly, the confirmation of the structuring role of the agents of transition, particularly those appointed by the public authorities. Finally, the identification of the plurality of challenges in this restructuring of the forms of transition (challenges having to do both with training and the mobility of the workforce). Finally, the need to extend analyses of the behaviour of young people in order to see how they adapt to this restructuring and which criteria led to different paths in this transition process.

b) Work on the links between school and production. The first (Monaco 1993) analysed how alternative training schemes historically shifted in France from a educational approach (fight against school drop-outs) to the progressive construction of new links between schools and companies. They revealed the scale and structural character of this process and stressed the trend for new alternative forms to be located in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the services sector and the two-fold development of selective job insecurity and the creation of a new "intermediate status"[5] for young people. They outlined the main factors in the initial problem, for example the differentiation between the process of transition[6] and examined in greater detail issues which had only been touched on initially, for example the transformation of the educational system, the shift in frontiers and players.

   Some of this extended work showed that alternance had all the characteristics of OOT and that it was undoubtedly one form of this. Other studies to do with qualification contracts (Berton/Gérard/Lhotel 1992) showed that the "labour market" was becoming increasingly structured in social terms and that this kind of scheme was spreading throughout sectors and qualifications which were normally not the domain of integration programmes. One of their conclusions was that it could not be ruled out that these types of management of the "external labour market" formerly "reserved" to the most vulnerable groups in salaried employment were spreading in changed forms because they were more "positive" to other categories.

   All these studies led to the hypothesis that alternance schemes were encouraging three main innovations in respect of the flexibility and mobility of the workforce (Lhotel/ Monaco 1993). First of all, the new forms of flexibility and mobility touched on areas of qualification and employment which had traditionally been viewed as part of the "primary market". These forms could encourage insecurity by combining success in access to work and salaried employment with a gradual increase in the vulnerability of young people for unemployment. Finally, they could lead simultaneously to a change in competition on the labour market, to its links to the forms of internal management of the workforce and to an extension of occupational transition schemes.

c) Research on a special aspect of integration: the TUC-CES[7] (Meyer 1992). His examination of the links between individual strategies and "integration" bodies and his analysis of the question of socialisation and employment threw some light on the heterogeneous nature of the groups concerned, a two-fold structuring of the schemes on the basis of the bodies and the individuals subject to the constraints imposed by macro-social factors and the scheme's role in creating an identity (apprenticeship in specific links to employment, preparation for new functions on the labour market).

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[5] between training and employment

[6] *"some young people for some companies"*

[7] community work-employment solidarity contracts

This research changed the approach to the initial problem of OOT since the schemes which it examined were not strictly limited to young people. It allowed itself to ask whether transition did not perhaps also mean dealing with groups who were permanently on the fringes of the traditional employment system and creating very special links to employment (how can one talk about transition if nothing becomes stable?). Furthermore, by demonstrating that the TUC-CES could be seen either as a restructuring of forms of employment or as a simple avoidance of social friction, it raised questions about the validity of the segmentation theories: were the TUC-CES one of the forms of "peripheral employment"[8] or did they anticipate a form which was going to spread in which case the theories of segmentation would have been proved wrong.

2.2.2.2 Work on other groups

Since the initial concept of occupational transition did not just involve young people, work on other categories of groups was sure to re-examine the issue of OOT. This was particularly the case in two sets of work on groups in the process of re-entering employment or in the process of "breaking" (with employment).

a) Work on adult retraining schemes first involved evaluating the internal functioning and the external effects of the collective bargaining provisions in the steel industry on the retraining paths of salaried employees. Without playing down the importance of national forms of collective bargaining in setting up the schemes under review, they demonstrated the importance of local groups of players in the internal dynamics of these schemes which took them on to wider reflection on the links between economic restructuring, the role of (Ford-like) work and employment standards and territorial restructuring (Méhaut/Villeval 1990, Villeval 1992).

This more in-depth analysis stressed to a greater degree the effect of retraining on the internal reshaping of the workforce and the transformation in the bridges and divides between the organised salaried workforce and the non-organised salaried workforce. All of a sudden this led to a confrontation between the problems of retraining and occupational transition, mainly based on two observations. Firstly, that of the simultaneous development in this crisis of three trends common to everyone seeking employment for the first time and adults undergoing retraining: a trend towards the prolonging and "objectivising" of the transitional phase between leaving school (and a job) and access to a (another) job particularly marked amongst unskilled young people and some salaried employees in the hard core of the workforce, a trend towards the growing institutionalisation of this phase by setting up new social schemes and bodies to handle this differentiated mobility depending on the groups requiring training, and finally a trend towards allocating these groups to insecure or "secondary" jobs with the allocation of those who had already been in employment to jobs with a lower status. Furthermore, it was also observed that despite differences in the groups concerned, the forms of organisation of retraining had various elements which were also to be found in OOT as was the same challenge: differentiated management of mobility in the different stages of life and, more generally, the restructuring of salaried employment in periods of crisis.

These analogies, therefore, confronted the initial issue of OOT with a new and important problem: the length of the transition period. Consequently, a need to extend research in the direction of exclusion (of all ages) encountered the problem which had initially been shaped around the integration of young people.

b) Work on schemes for the long-term unemployed (Boulayoune/Jory 1992) examined more directly the initial problem of OOT. In a context of growing long-term unemployment and the spread of public schemes to deal with this phenomenon in France, their main results suggested that the group of the unemployed concerned were less removed from the labour market and occupational socialisation than had originally been thought, that it had a low level of training, that this training had little impact on facilitating a return to employment and that there was a progressive distancing of some groups of unemployed people from the traditional field of salaried employment. After having identified major similarities between schemes for young people and schemes for the long-term unemployed, their conclusions directly challenged the concept of OOT: - (on the one hand) *the struggle against exclusion cannot necessarily be resolved by way of integration; in the case of the organisation of occupational transition it does not allow the allocation of a workforce made up of the long-term unemployed; (...) furthermore if it does permit this, this will be done by means of radically different schemes which will permit a transformation in the salaried working group. In this case, it will be the very image of occupational transition which will change".*

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[8] Jobs different from "central jobs" because of their status and their location for integration into the production system

This conclusion was more finely tuned in a paper on the difficulties of OOT when it comes to analysing the special form of transition which was found in schemes to combat long-term unemployment (Jory, 1997). Problems were identified which had to do with three dimensions of the transition process proposed by J. Rose (complex process characterised by the entanglement of employment status, components, functions): increasingly complex entanglement of status (unemployed, not in employment) meant that the concept of transition would lose some of its foundations since they were based on an institutional classification of situations which underestimated the permeability of the borders between the different statuses. The forms of integration-reintegration in schemes to combat long-term unemployment were oriented on a very large scale towards employment. The challenge of analysing this in terms of transition would involve less seeing this as an intermediate state, the duration of which would be difficult to grasp, but rather understanding that institutionalised forms of access and re-access to employment are structural modes of the organisation of situations of individuals vis-à-vis employment. The lack of clear boundaries between the structures of the "internal and external labour markets" had less to do with the supposed existence of a competitive market opposed to forms of non-commercial coordination and more to do with a major shift in the locations for the re-definition of employment in which the definition of monetary revenue played a role and was the pivot for social recognition of work.

All in all, by placing the emphasis on determining the modes of access or even re-access to employment, OOT underestimated the forms of access and re-access to work as the dominant form of social recognition of work.

2.2.3 More general developments in research in conjunction with the problem of OOT

The profound changes in the employment system during the last fifteen years in France was, beyond the work by GREE, the basis for the driving force behind the shifts in the attitude of research staff to integration, unemployment and the insecure nature of employment. If these shifts confirmed some of the anticipation presented in the initial approach to OOT, they also examined more serious questions such as the consequences of more in-depth research or even a restructuring of research.

2.2.3.1 Research on integration

Developments in research in this field waved between confirmation and a challenging of the initial issue of OOT. This process was particularly sensitive to the finer tuning of the characteristics of the process of occupational transition and to the shift in the theoretical questions and concepts used to analyse it.

The main characteristics of integration in the initial issue of OOT have been confirmed: today it is largely admitted that young people do not constitute a homogenous group and that integration is a complex multi-dimensional process which should be studied on the basis of the different paths and the problem of unemployment (Maruani/Reynaud 1993). It was also accepted that the increase in unemployment increases the process of selectivity vis-a-vis young people by partly excluding them to a growing degree from the process of occupational integration and that the public authorities are playing an increasingly decisive role in the occupational integration of young people (Lagrée 1989).

However, major questions have been raised in terms of the short term analysis of occupational transition. The main ones were listed in a summary of the "*current*" characteristics of transition: "*this period has become longer, (...) the divide between "school" status and "active" working person is still there but less clear, (...) entry into working life is increasingly by means of an insecure first job, most of the time with a contract of the type "youth scheme", (...) the occupational transition of young people more frequently involves periods of unemployment than it did ten years ago, (...) there is a great diversity in the forms of transition between initial training and working life ...*" (General Commissioner for the Plan 1993). The development of work on the paths taken by young people also examined this concept of occupational transition. By revealing the diverse nature of integration, they implicitly challenged the ability of this concept to take account of all these different paths. This was particularly obvious in the research which stressed the increase in the types of integration dominated by uncertainty, flexibility and the reversibility of the situation of young people vis-à-vis employment (Nicole-Drancourt 1992), the distinction between the types of occupational integration of young people between long paths which involved permanent lifestyles outside responsibility and true social status and short paths rapidly leading to salaried employment and the beginning of a professional career (Linhart/Malan 1990) or the divide between young people excluded from the process of occupational integration and those who must more or less directly obtain a job (Outin/Serrier 1991).

This fine tuning of all the characteristics of occupational integration, therefore, seriously challenged the frontiers, contents, functions and even the very organisation itself of the process of occupational integration proposed at the beginning of the 1980s. However no new formulation of the problem of integration or transition appeared. Even if most of the studies felt that the speed and quality of the integration of young people generally depended on three groups of factors (training, environment and structure of the individual)[9], no study truly hierarchised the relative importance of each of these three groups nor were any efforts made to assemble a combination of their effects in order to achieve a revised or alternative approach.

Three trends emerged in the shift in the theoretical questions and concepts used to analyse the process of occupational integration. First of all, a development of studies in the field of biographies, cohorts, generations and life cycles emerged in parallel to new reflections in the area of socialisation and exclusion. Both progressively stressed the need to examine the links between employment (non-employment) / lifestyles in terms of interaction (Bouffartigues, Lagrée, Rose 1989) and the establishment of young people's identity (Demazière 1992).

Finally, the development of international studies revealed the impact of societal characteristics on occupational integration and thus opened up new areas of reference and analysis of the explanatory factors behind this, more particularly: the "educational" foundations of occupational integration traditions[10] (Freyssinet 1990), the polarisation of occupational integration by systems of workforce mobility[11] (Lefresne 1992), the influence of systems of occupational relations on the integration of young people[12] (Marsden 1989; Garonna/Ryan 1989).

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[9] Individual characteristics such as gender, age, social background, professional status of parents etc, characteristics of training such as speciality, level, qualification, orientation, paths etc. and environmental and structural characteristics such as the local socio-economic context, corporate policies, integration agents

[10] for example, scholastic traditions in France, apprenticeship in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the United Kingdom

[11] for example in the United Kingdom, processes on the occupational market which authorised access to skilled employment and in France procedures characteristic of an internal market which systematically downgraded on recruitment and which used an extension or institutionalisation of the process of integration in order to filter access to skilled employment

[12] particularly the acceptability or unacceptability of a lower level of remuneration for young people, a polarisation of their access to certain types of employment, their interchangeability with other workers, etc.

Finally, a continuation of conceptualisation work in the field of occupational integration particularly in two studies. One began with the idea of a dual rapprochement between allocation and socialisation of the workforce and between occupational transition and family transition (Galland 1985, 1990). It advanced the theory that recent times had provoked a confusing of these aspects, "*We must both put together a social definition of its place in society and make sure that this definition corresponds to an occupational position. It is sometimes the definition work which is long and difficult and it is sometimes the work of practical construction of this position, and its often the two processes which, both successively and alternatively, mean a long process of gradual adjustment*". Therefore, it defined a "moratorium period" characterised by an extension of this moratorium period during the crisis of the periods of transition from school to employment and from the family of origin to training in a new family entity with intermediate periods and changes in the clear contours of the borders during these periods.

Another study attempted to explain the extension of occupational integration in France since the beginning of the 1970s (Maruani/Reynaud 1993). It advanced the theory that in the beginning this extension corresponded to a delay caused by unemployment since at the beginning of the 1990s, it involved the creation of a new standard for employment characterised by a precarious situation which resulted from an economic decision to create fixed-term jobs and the social decision to give these jobs to young people whilst stipulating that a standard employment of this kind had been set up as a result both of deliberate intervention by public policy and intervention by players such as companies and the young people themselves.

Here again all these reflections confirmed some of the developments anticipated in the initial approach to OOT, for example the importance in the crisis of the role played by public authorities or the increasingly complex and multi-functional character of the process of occupational transition. However, they did also very clearly question this approach by stressing more particularly that its overly unilateral character underestimated the room for manoeuvre which young people could have in the transition schemes and consequently also the importance that there was in considering their behaviour when analysing the transition process.

2.2.3.2 Research on unemployment

In this area most of the studies showed that in France this was a large scale phenomenon which was relatively recent and affected an increasingly diverse range of people: certainly young people, women, but also skilled adults. The research staff with the closest links to OOT examined the paths of the unemployed and public policies to combat long-term unemployment.

The first studies involved identifying the types of paths (Gelot/Michel[13] 1991; Demazière[14] 1992) and their distinguishing features. The most important of these features seems to be work experience and unemployment, individual variables and the situation on the labour market. Some studies which stressed more specifically the first of these three variables revealed a certain specificity amongst the long-term unemployed compared with young people during the integration process by stressing, for example, the essential role of two aspects of looking for employment "*availability*" and "*distance to employment*" defined by "*lack of professional experience and ability to undertake a precise and targeted search*" (Huygues-Despointes 1990) or even "*the impact of a person's occupational past (no professional experience, repeated unemployment, coming from non-employment...)*" (Joutard/Werquin 1992).

Studies on public policies clearly indicated that they played a decisive role both in unemployment and in integration. For example, one of them stressed that programmes to combat unemployment from the very beginning had been very much inspired by schemes for young people, particularly by presenting the individual nature of training paths and occupational integration, recognition of the central role of companies and "immersion" in a work environment but also flexible definitions of "target groups" (Bouillaguet 1992). Another study focusing on policies to combat long-term unemployment revealed forms of intervention such as the selectivity of the labour market similar to those in occupational integration policies for young people ("*reducing the costs of workforce recruitment, increasing its level of qualification whilst reducing the burden of training costs on companies, setting up intermediary institutions*"). It stressed, as in the case of young people, that the non-automatic or linear character of the integration process revealed a relative degree of autonomy amongst the individuals who were involved in it (Reynaud 1993).

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[13] Distinction between three types of path of the long-term unemployed: people in the process of integration (mainly young people and men), people in the process of being excluded (high proportion of women aged between 25 and 49), discouraged people who have withdrawn from the labour market (above all women and the long-term unemployed).

[14] Distinction between four types of path experienced by the long-term unemployed: break with a fatalistic attitude, abandoning of mobility, downgrading with traumatic effects, insecure nature of the network

Despite the preceding analogies and descriptions, unemployment and, more specifically, the prolongation of the length of unemployment, have remained phenomena which are both very difficult to interpret and highly controversial. For some research staff, the market approach is not relevant because, for example, long-term unemployment is "*a social construct*" reinforced by specific public policies and "*the struggle against long-term unemployment does not involve balancing existing supply and demand but the co-ordinated transformation of supply and demand, thereby giving a central role to intermediaries on the labour market*" (Freyssinet 1992). Inversely for others, the market approach remains relevant because for example "*no overall theory has replaced what continues to be the reference model, that of maintaining a balance by means of price*". This is also because the elements in this approach such as the theories of job search, insiders, outsiders, or investment in human resources would even be able to explain the prolongation of the length of unemployment (Renaud 1993) or even because "*the search for format explains the generalisation of the long-term unemployed*" and because "*the predisposition of an economy to long-term unemployment depends on the main characteristics of the labour market in the widest sense*" (Vincens 1993).

These studies perhaps even more than those on integration swayed more towards challenging the initial approach to OOT. Firstly, strong analogies between the groups, the policies or the processes of occupational integration which were in the beginning very different seemed to confirm that the integration of young people must be considered as one form amongst others of mobility. But on closer examination of the partial overlapping between the groups of young people in integration and the unemployed in integration, the extension of the period of integration (reintegration) in each of the two groups or even the existence of successive periods of integration and occupational reintegration in the trajectories of some young people involving some "intermediate status" of alternance, the same analogies in fact strongly challenged the special character of the intermediate or transitory state between school and employment originally assigned to the process of occupational transition. At least they drew attention to the need to re-examine in greater depth the long-term trajectories of young people and of the unemployed and to examine the question of the link to employment, an essential distinguishing variable in the trajectories of the long-term unemployed but also to take young people into consideration.

Furthermore, the difficulties in theorising long-term unemployment were relatively similar to those of integration. They went beyond these two subjects and they, even more than the initial approach to OOT, outline the need for more systematic reflection on the possible limits and moving beyond the boundaries of the main theories about the labour market. In all events, these analogies between young people and the long-term unemployed and their respective links to access/re-access to employment brought to light a limit which might in fact be intrinsic in the analysis of the term of transition: given that there was no sound theoretical analytical framework for the "labour market", developments in the approach to OOT seemed to be condemned to being overly influenced by the subjects which they observed (young people, young people in integration, suffering exclusion, then the unemployed, adults undergoing retraining, etc.) and by the tools which it used to do this (biographical studies, life cycles, cohorts, generations etc.).

2.2.3.3 Research into insecurity

Finally, research on this subject also examined the issue of OOT. However, unlike preceding studies, their developments and the analytical results immediately seemed more conducive to greater in-depth study and re-examination of the problem involved. This is perhaps because they tended to tackle head on analyses of insecurity and mobility and to interpret and observe them on two diametrically opposed levels: first of all the macro-social, economic and historical level of development of job insecurity and then the transformation in the system of workforce mobility and in the micro-social level of the insecurity of individuals in their life cycle. Here we have two levels of analysis which the initial approach to OOT suggested should be dealt with simultaneously and a critical appraisal made of the changes in the way in which the "internal and external markets" operated,, something which it wanted to develop. Perhaps a more trivial reason for this was that research on insecurity tended to be more inclined than did previous studies to take up the issue of OOT in their analyses and not just a descriptive category of occupational transition.

Having said that, recent developments in work on integration was supported to a major degree by transformation in the forms of mobility which the studies on mobility undertaken regularly and for some time by INSEE clearly identified. An evaluation of these studies (Béduwé 1992) stressed that they offered more reliable results over the longer term "*co-existence of different forms of mobility, specificities of female mobility, role of initial and continuing training in mobility, importance of the specificity of the diploma in its explanation, impact of external market on promotion, effect of the supply of employment on mobility currents...*". That very same evaluation also indicated that the interpretation of these results had followed developments in the question linked to work on the renewal of occupations and the functioning of the labour market. Thus "today", training clearly has a fundamental effect on opportunities for later mobility and as a guarantee against downgrading, or even the loss of a job but it is not the sole distinguishing variable in mobility. There are also the effects "*of gender, age, choice of first job, sector of activity or size of company*" which, although recorded at the beginning of each study, could not then be extracted from the structural data on the development of the labour market.

On these bases, research on insecurity itself attempted to analyse the progression of this phenomenon, the diversification of its forms and the risks which it entailed in terms of exclusion. One of them (Fourcade 1992) distinguished between "*situational*" insecurity (very strong likelihood of being forced to change a situation) and "*experienced*" insecurity (depending on the number of jobs held during a certain time). This suggested an economic analysis of insecurity which would not only take into consideration the length of employment but also three other inseparable aspects: discontinuity, income and social protection. It could also demonstrate a major renewal of the diversity of special employment situations marked at the beginning of the 1990s by "*major instability in the forms of employment and a renewal of usage and users* (of these forms)". Its conclusions stressed the direct consequences of this transformation for young people who were exposed more than anyone else to this insecurity. It stipulated in this context that "*the main development since the 1960s was less a change in the intensity of mobility at the beginning of working life rather than a turnaround in the reasons for this mobility and the appearance of transition involving a larger number and longer periods of unemployment*".

Other studies also addressed the issue of juvenile insecurity. One examined the effect of this insecurity on young people. Was this a dominant model of integration which made this insecurity "*a cyclic, random phenomenon virtually experienced by all young people*" or did integration take the form of queues or a cascade effect and "*by stages in successive steps*" ? (Nicole-Drancourt 1992). Another study undertook a similar investigation based on the development of part-time work. It stressed that during the 1980s when this kind of employment was increasingly emerging for unskilled workers, the main qualitative change was in the emergence on a large scale of part-time work at the beginning of people's working lives. It, therefore, raised the question of whether "*this new age, young people, part-time employment wasn't just one of the forms of insecurity and constituted an extension of the phase of occupational integration which despite everything was an interim phase or inversely the new* *scale of this form of employment was going to put its stamp on the entire cycle of professional life for generations to come*"? (Bouffartigues/de Coninck/Pendariès 1992).

Finally, if all these studies on insecurity justifiably challenged the use of the concept of occupational transition isolated from its organisation, for example by not examining the intermediate or temporary character of the transitional phase or by envisaging a multiplicity of forms of transition without truly examining the set of determining factors and social roles, they, like research on integration and unemployment, repositioned the issue of OOT in most of the theoretical approaches they had adopted in the beginning: a non-balancing approach to the links between training and employment, an examination which was perforce more general about mobility of the workforce, a more in-depth reflection on the external or even secondary "labour market" to take in its social organisation and its links with the internal or even primary "labour market", an examination of occupational transition as one of the forms of developing and restructuring salaried employment etc. In our opinion this involves linking in this research the analyses of insecurity and mobility and, in these analyses, examining considerations about the "labour market" as a whole and also individual behaviour.

2.3 Current and future perspectives of the issue of OOT

2.3.1 Impressions of incompleteness

The developments in studies outlined above, whether they were conducted or not by GREE, have confirmed and sharpened some observations formulated in the approach to OOT proposed by J. Rose at the beginning of the 1980s. Thus in France today, the scale of the phenomena of integration, unemployment and insecurity, the diverse nature of the situations relating to employment, unemployment, training, inactivity as well as the discriminatory variables which this approach anticipated are well known. The concept of transition has become common language and it is often the term preferred to integration. The main criteria of the organisation of occupational transition are generally recognised (structuring role of corporate and public authority policies, groups concerned not just young people, effects in terms of differentiated management of movements of the workforce and transformation of the processes and contents of initial vocational training, growing complexity of forms and prolongation of occupational transition phases.), etc.

However, in the course of the development of these phenomena which were the subject and the development of the orientations, tools and methods used to observe and interpret them, some vicissitudes interfered in the initial approach to OOT thereby eroding much of its foundations. For example, there might be excessive use of the concept of transition stripped of its "occupational" attribute and, more annoyingly, of its involvement, although inseparable, in the initial problem of overly basing the analysis of occupational transition on individual paths, cohorts, generations and in this way of overestimating the interpretation of the behaviour of individuals even if this has added a dimension which was underestimated in the beginning, of exclusively seeing transition from the angle of links to access to employment to the detriment of other links which are equally important such as links to employment, to salaries or even between work and employment today. Sections of major importance in the research programme undertaken in conjunction with OOT have not been addressed very much. Hence, given the lack of true back-up for the subject of "occupational transition" in a more general theoretical framework for the analysis of workforce mobility, structures and functionings of "external markets (even secondary markets) and internal (even primary) markets" and their reciprocal links, transformations in salaried employment and changes in the production system, the concept of transition has very often been coerced into being a descriptive category which was then unable to cope with the very many observations which in fact carried it.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that when any research programme, like OOT, starts, it had to meet a hierarchy of priorities, that the area of theoretical reflection which it opened up was and still is on a large scale and involves difficulties, that research work is not a purely intellectual exercise but a social exercise with its funding provisions and co-operation, controversy and conflicts, dead ends and detours etc. and that after just under ten years, despite everything this programme has produced numerous new findings. At the very most, the most dramatic factor is not the extension in itself of its duration but rather the social significance of this extension which itself, in one way or another, is linked to the extended length of the phases of occupational transition for certain sectors and growing proportions of the population. This brings us back, without retracing our footsteps, to the fundamental challenges to any initial formulation of an issue like OOT, that of the conditions of integration into work, labour and salaried employment.

2.3.2 Proposals for adaptation

The author of the initial study on OOT himself proposed in a synthesis report entitled "*The continuing occupational transition*" (Rose 1994) that this should be adapted, given the vicissitudes mentioned above, the more general criticism and the factual and theoretical context of the developments of research which we examined in the second chapter. New facts and unresolved problems about the forms, players and roles of OOT justify a move of this kind.

2.3.2.1 Forms of OOT

Rose reminded us above everything else that we could not examine the problem of transition without looking at the organisation of transition. Having said that he felt that we had to review at least four aspects of the forms of OOT.

a) Concerning only the forms of OOT. At the beginning they were mainly considered via institutional forms of organisation associated to state policies of integration (main innovation at that time). Given the identification since then of the importance of other forms, we had to add those which were linked to local policies, to institutions involved in managing employment, to the groups which were unemployed and outside work, to the reception and training bodies but also to more flexible forms of organisation stemming both from bodies and from the interpersonal relations of the individuals. For Rose, it was therefore possible to define more clearly the current forms of OOT and, more particularly, their degree of independence of (or control by) companies, the state, individuals and their proximity to employment. In our opinion, we should endeavour to position OOT in a far more finely tuned societal approach involving global, intermediate, local and individual levels and, therefore, providing a development foundation from the angle of European comparison which could not be reduced to the mere juxtaposition of national state models. There is even greater interest in this since an approach of this kind had been encouraged from the very beginning (Boyer 1984) but it had been lying fallow since then. We will endeavour to examine this aspect in greater detail in the third part.

b) Concerning the major determining forms of OOT. J. Rose stressed that for the downstream determining factors, it was enough to update studies on company policies but that in the case of "upstream" determining factors, we had to overcome a major gap in the initial training system. In fact, he only mentioned initial work and, therefore, there had to be more in-depth analysis of the role of the school in setting up and preparing OOT in terms of its contents, training practices, schemes, orientation procedures and links with companies. For us, this interest also involves adding another large dimension to the development of the approach to OOT with a view to European comparison. We will devote the entire second part to this aspect stipulating that it is partially linked to the elements of a societal approach in the last section. We should add by way of conclusion concerning the "upstream" determining factors that when assessing the forms of OOT, there must be closer inspection of the role of the public authorities other than on the global state level.

c) Concerning the diversity of forms and rhythms of transition. The main problem involved in the approach to OOT was that of determining the end of the transition period. Underestimated in initial work, no solution has been found in the meantime. In fact, the identification of major and growing differences between the groups concerned ("*some continue to find a job almost immediately whereas others are permanently excluded from activity*" p.44) raised the crucial question as to whether we could still talk about transition if no situation was becoming stable for a growing number of these groups. This question was all the more crucial because we had to ask ourselves which situation are we talking about. In fact, the boundaries between employment and non-employment, activity and inactivity, work and training etc. seemed increasingly nebulous. The intermingling of these situations became so inextricable that the individuals themselves, the public authorities and the statisticians found it increasingly difficult to distinguish between them. In order to clarify this problem, J. Rose thought that despite everything, the structuring element of an intermingling of this kind continued to be the link to employment and, consequently, it was necessary for initial studies to focus first on the questions of employment and work. In his opinion this was the way first of all of being able to better differentiate between the forms of transition in respect of their rhythm and destination in order then to undertake a more finely tuned characterisation and finally in order to be able to announce the emergence of a new link to work which was both unstable and more socially structured for a growing number of gainfully employed people.

d) Concerning groups affected by the forms of transition. The transition process proved to be a time for categorising and selecting groups beyond that of young people only (unemployed adults, adults undergoing retraining, etc.). However although major differences were highlighted between individuals depending on the paths they took, the criteria for their selection still had to be explained and hierarchised all the more because a selection of this kind was far more radical than had been envisaged in the beginning (cf. breakdown of groups into different paths of integration-reintegration but also exclusion). J. Rose saw two ways of reviewing this aspect: on the one hand, to take up all the criteria for partitioning paths of integration, both individual and of the environment or destination in order to transpose them at the transition without more a priori than the selection of a group as a result of relatively independent practices (of the public authorities, people in charge of transition, companies, etc.) and on the other hand, incorporating the exclusion of some groups into the concept of transition ("*as an extreme form of diluting the link to employment*?" p.47).

2.3.2.2 Players and roles in OOT

Rose thought that these two aspects should be considered in greater detail given the importance of the developments towards a larger number of players and roles identified already in the initial studies on OOT.

a) Concerning the diversity of players in OOT. Whereas in the mid-1970s there were only two types of players in integration who were considered (individuals and companies), the structural changes brought about by the crisis in France led to the emergence of new types of players in this field: the state, various integration institutions and even the system of initial continuing training. Rose consequently felt that the approach to OOT had to be corrected both by re-balancing it and by analysing the role of each of these integration agents by taking greater note of their distinguishing features (relative independencies) and by "rehabilitating" also the role of the subject", i.e. the room for manoeuvre given to individuals in "handling" their future and the production of their practices. This proposal was based in particular on the work methods of GREE linked to OOT, most of which involved the analysis of programmes, forms, combinations of "institutional" players and the positions and paths of the individuals concerned. From this J. Rose established a theoretical need to undertake an analysis of occupational transition in conjunction with public policies, branch policies, company policies and individual policies (cf. hypothesis of the team according to which progressive transformations and access/non-access to occupational activity emerged as an activity involving the management and institutional regulation of socio-economic change.

b) Concerning the plurality of roles of OOT. Rose felt that first and foremost it was a matter of examining the idea that OOT was one of the forms of developing and restructuring salary links in a period of crisis as soon as there was a major gap between the increasingly socially organised character of the transition and the global challenging of numerous forms of so called administered regulation. This also made sense because it was now clear that OOT had to do with all the components in salaried employment (mobilisation, maintenance and use of the workforce). The major challenge in reviewing the problem was improved analysis of the differentiated management of workforce mobility (appeal-rejection, complex "mechanisms" of dualisation and exclusion). He suggested three ways of examining this issue. First of all to look at changes in the conditions of acquiring know-how and knowledge in the light of shifts in the respective role of transition bodies and companies in the area. Then, by challenging the arrangements for remuneration of the workforce in respect of the role of transition schemes with a view to reducing the level of resources and shift in the burden of remuneration towards public authorities. Finally, behind the participation of these schemes in changes in forms of salaried work, on their socio-political role in respect of making a context socially acceptable which was characterised to a large degree by the obvious exclusion and pushing to the fringes of numerous groups.

3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM AND ORGANISATION OF TRANSITION: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Following the progressive emergence throughout Europe of a moratorium period between leaving the training system and entering employment, the concept of occupational transition was often used when comparing different Member States in the European Community. This homogeneity in terminology should not, however, conceal considerable heterogeneity in the problems, definitions and methods used to analyse this phenomenon.

In the field of international comparison there are major differences for instance between the advocates of adequacy approaches to integration in which the concept of occupational transition only makes sense when linked to the hypothesis of a malfunctioning of the links between training and employment and the advocates of specific approaches to the organisation of occupational transition in which the same concept only makes sense when linked to the hypothesis of socio-economic and institutional management of passages from training to employment. It is very hard to accommodate contradictory theories such as these a priori. They exacerbate the difficulties involved in comparison which in our opinion stem less from the differences in structural conditions from country to country than from the theoretical options used to analyse occupational transition.

These difficulties are not completely insurmountable or at least do not prevent progress in comparative research on transition. We do feel that it is possible to reconcile them by reducing the difficulties which themselves are far more independent of prior theoretical choices without, of course, abandoning the field of theoretical research, quite the contrary. We are thinking in particular of the problems encountered by all of us when it comes to determining the length and the nature of the period of occupational transition. Can it be equated with a succession or a confusion of status, situations, periods between leaving the educational system and entering employment? In both cases, what factors should be used to identify the two extreme limits to this interval?

In this inventory of questions, there is a major divide between research which defines the period of transition as the two last years of compulsory schooling and research which views occupational transition as beginning when people leave the training system and involving periods with a great diversity of situations such as inactivity, unemployment, training courses, some types of jobs etc. (This is the most frequent case for research in France). And in the same list we were to ask ourselves whether it would not be better to include the duration of initial vocational training in the period of occupational transition and to consider this latter as being a continuum between the sphere of education and the sphere of employment?

It is certainly true that when we characterise the period of transition on the basis of concepts such as "career" or school path or on the basis of post-school courses and paths, each case has its own reality which is very often shaped by identifiable structures and schemes which, in turn, affect the overall development of the system under review (education in the first case, workforce mobility in the second).

Despite that, we feel that international comparison of occupational transition would gain a great deal by bringing these two types of approach closer together, all the more so since there are today many factors which point in that direction. Let's examine some of them.

First of all, in each of these approaches, the period of initial training is never completely independent of post-school forms of occupational transition. We can see this very clearly in the studies involving the evaluation of the results of training systems which are normally done in terms of access to employment and where "school careers" or the levels of training are more or less systematically equated with a predictive criterion for the access of individuals to employment. This is also evident in the search for diverse post-school forms of occupational transition which always included the training characteristics of the individuals (level, qualification, speciality) amongst the main determining variables of these forms and this irrespective of the theoretical approach adopted in the beginning.

We then saw in the first part of this report about work in France on the need to adapt the approach to the organisation of occupational transition, that this must today involve greater analysis of the role of the education system in the preparation and setting up of OOT.

Finally, on the international level, we can see increasing convergence between research exclusively oriented towards training systems and specific studies on occupational transition. This applies both to national monographs and to the comparisons themselves. For example there is a growing consensus on the need for analysis to focus on temporal and even sequential dimensions: in analyses of training systems which are all too often static and in comparisons which are like snapshots as well as in analyses of forms of occupational transition which are forced to take into account their diversity and above all their prolongation. We also see convergence in international comparisons themselves which are beginning in each of the two research areas to stress the irreversible character of recourse to the diachronic dimension to study both the differences between the national contexts and the internal developments within each of these contexts (CÉREQ 1997). In this respect we can see that between research on educational systems and research on occupational transition, there is also convergence in the development of "appropriate" methods and tools along the lines of diachronic analysis (Bauer/Maresca 1992) such as monitoring of the cohorts, the longitudinal approach or biographical analysis even if they constitute research aids which are supposed to overcome some difficulties (cf. box 1).

In the second part we will endeavour to understand better the extent to which convergence in work involving international comparisons of training system and occupational transition will help to develop an approach to the organisation of occupational transition which will incorporate to a greater degree educational systems or all or some of the occupational strands in these systems.

3.1 Difficulties in the international comparison of vocational training systems

The question of international comparison, whether applied to educational systems or more globally to forms of occupational transition, meets demands and raises certain questions. Without returning to the transnational bodies which produce studies and comparative reports, which are normally of a statistically descriptive nature, we shall examine here some methodological reserves about comparison.

Work seeking to characterise these different methods abounded with the development of bodies linked to the European Community. Aside from describing the special features of each country in terms of its constitution, access and interpretation of its own statistical elements, it tends to focus today rather on the analysis of joint categories set up by "competent bodies" (OECD, Eurostat).

One of these contributions[15] stresses the fact that there is a clear interdependency between the very subject of research in education and the nature and sense of comparative research. In fact, it is "*the sociological context of schooling and the effective functioning of school systems which give a meaning to indicators and comparisons*". This trend is particularly obvious in the sociology of French or at least non-English-speaking education (Dérouet/Henriot 1987). This may indicate the relative inefficiency of transnational indicators for training systems not juts in statistical terms but also in conjunction with the more or less common attitudes concerning the necessary advance of training systems and the level of minimum education within each country. We shall come back to this point by identifying the more or less permanent categories applied to educational systems depending on their supposed "state" of development (north-south divide). As far as educational statistics are concerned, the same report reveals the various problems involved in comparative analysis irrespective of the analytical unit used. They note in fact that implicit consensus emerges when we categorise the types of organisation of national systems and that, in parallel to this, we tend to focus comparison on other levels or subjects (particularly on social mobility). Now it is not certain that this consensus will be able to guarantee the production of truly common indicators on the basis of which we really can undertake a comparative analysis of the more relevant segments of the training system. Hence the categories on which scientific studies are based are subject to a certain number of restrictions as a consequence of the determination and definition of the subjects for analysis themselves.

In fact, the international indicators (CITE[16] nomenclatures, the levels of schooling) do not always refer to the same realities for all the countries concerned. The possibility of establishing equivalent indicators is considerably challenged by the non-standardisation of nomenclature whereas it is normally the case that international bodies have a common and agreed list of questions and goals. One common practice, for instance, is to evaluate the process of transition towards the world of work on the basis of the characteristics of people leaving the training system. However, it is still not possible to undertake a comparison and a transversal evaluation of this kind on the basis of a steady indicator (the level of training or the qualification obtained) since the selected indicator does not have the same significance over time or the same meaning within national configurations. Taking into account the "value" or the use of the qualification obtained on the labour market(s) means it is necessary for there to be prior comprehensive clarification of the means of access, constitution and qualification to which it is subjected. It is a matter of knowing whether it is reasonable to record the acquisition of qualifications by individuals, independently of the social environment[17] of which they are part?

The production of statistical indicators for comparative purposes, which is mainly based on school statistics and employment studies supplied by national bodies, is thus confronted with the problem of identifying the structural and organisational aspects of the existing training and education systems. This makes any form of equivalent research difficult. This difficulty becomes very tangible when we observe the categories produced in a transversal manner. It is also obvious in work aiming to compare and classify countries on the basis of common characteristics. If they are to make any sense at all, they can only be based on globally measurable and assimilable components[18].

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[15] cf. Analyse comparative, problémes et méthodes. CNRS, 1997, pp. 23-57

[16] It has been observed for example that the CITE category of levels 0 to 2 does not involve the same volume of individuals in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, (48%, 18% and 32% respectively) nor does it include the same individuals within these countries in conjunction with the relative weight of levels 0 to 2 and 3

[17] Environment which is often retranslated depending on the position held by the qualification in the internal selection process of the training system, development over time of the meaning and the value of a qualification and school qualifications in general, the organisation of channels and their method of validation, particularly with regard to career and vocational guidance, the form of certification and marking which brings us back to access to the qualification as well as the way in which qualifications are put together and shaped.

This is obviously one of the main reasons for increased recourse to social analysis in all comparative studies and, more particularly, studies about institutional aspects. The question of school trajectories or transitions within educational systems is based on the main structures of social configurations and tends to be linked with internal policy structures. From the comparative angle, this implies the collection and compilation of material which will enable analysis, from the developmental angle, of forms of the above-mentioned institutional and political organisation. Recourse to social analysis is hence one way of getting around the bias which any compilation of material of this kind implies.

However, in terms of observation and analysis, it is important to pursue and integrate a certain number of theories to do with the characteristics of the development of occupational transition. By admitting that these characteristics depend as much on the special and specific development of the labour markets and educational system as they do on their mutual links, any recourse to a strictly institutional analysis, which ignores internal factors, will be of limited use. The interest in comparative analysis of occupational transition also means considering transformation in these links and including them as a way of explaining developments in the functions observed as was stressed by Vinokur (1995), "*each form of social organisation or production corresponds to a special form of socialisation of young people and of rationing of their access to a means of existence in which their qualifications may or may not play a role. If so, the type of control of this qualification will also be specific*".

This limit, which is common to all European comparative studies, is expressed on two levels. Firstly, most of the studies describe and compare existing systems in a static manner without examining any of the developments or their principal dynamics. When they do endeavour to take this dimension into account, the focus is on the political and internal voluntary character which prevails. Secondly, the major difficulty is distinguishing between the clear influence of these public policies on the organisation of training and transition and other determining factors (of course external), which are part and parcel of the socio-economic configurations under review.

All the same, the development of these studies in the 1980s testifies to improvements in the description of the main characteristics of integration mainly thanks to a shift in the theoretical questions and the concepts used.

3.2 The major empirical and theoretical trends relating to occupational transition, in a transversal manner to national situations

3.2.1 Empirical observations

The main results of these scientific and statistical studies increasingly document different empirical observations on occupational transition. We will focus here mainly on the question of developments in training systems (general and/or vocational education) without completely ignoring all the other common characteristics observed. The research has identified convergent developments in all countries, at least in respect of "social dynamics". There are three kinds.

a) The educational systems in different countries are all growing (both quantitatively and qualitatively) and, in most cases, we are seeing a general extension of time spent on education. This movement is accompanied by a fall in premature drop-outs and a general increase in the level of training amongst the population (national situations vary considerably in this respect). The last two decades have witnessed renewed or first time growth in investment in the field of education and an increase in teaching environments.

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[18] This problem already arises in the case of comparisons between two national contexts.

b) Parallel to this, countries have experienced an increase in unemployment and an extension of the transition period, particularly amongst young people. Almost all Members States have introduced increasingly sophisticated programmes to combat unemployment[19]. In fact between 1984 and 1996, youth unemployment increased (compared with the preceding decades) in all Member States of the European Community even if at the end of that period this trend was beginning to turn around. All the same these convergences are less significant than the movements observed in compulsory education. All the same, the situations are not "homogeneous" or symmetrical in all these countries. In a paper by Bouder/Mansuy/Werquin (1995), analysing the statistical situation of young people in Europe, major differences were identified in the period 1983 and 1991 between countries in the north and in the south concerning the situation of young people in integration programmes. There is a classic divide between these two groups of countries, the first being in a more favourable global situation in terms of unemployment and inactivity. It should be noted that during this period, three countries underwent what was described as a positive development in respect of these same criteria of success (employment/unemployment): Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany.

c) In the case of European vocational training systems, all the developments were not found to share the same characteristics. There are countries which have experienced significant increases in attendance and the level of schooling in these strands[20] since the beginning of the 1980s (Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy). There were also national developments which went in the opposite direction or where there were greater differences in the direction taken (France, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom). We shall come back later to the arguments which are normally used to explain these gaps. Not all vocational training systems in Europe are the same. There are many differences, the main one being whether vocational training is school based or not and also the "status" of vocational training schemes within the Member States. It is not really possible to identify common and transversal trends on the basis of the characteristics of groups in school or in vocational training. They may seem to be older on average and/or come from more modest social backgrounds (compared with individuals in equivalent levels of training in other types of channels), particularly in the national context in which vocational training becomes a solution for school drop-outs although this link is not always significant.

All vocational training systems, whether school-based or not, have experienced an increase in levels of training as well as a development in the special instruction offered by this type of institution. However, it is important here to mention the gap which may exist between the internal political desire for raising the levels of training and the reality of the influx of pupils and apprentices[21]. In this context it is preferable to turn observations into forecasts and to admit that in the years to come, most individuals will move towards increasingly higher levels of vocational training.

Some national reports do, however, point out the disadvantages and consequences of policies which think in terms of "level" rather than "content".

3.2.2 The persistence and/or convergence of analytical modes of occupational transition

We have to try to identify the elements which, because of their permanency or relative convergence, make the main analytical and discourse contributions to occupational transition on the basis of the training environment. Their main characteristics testify to the difficulty in defining and clarifying the basis on which the concept of transition is analysed. As has already been said, the education and training systems are often considered as independent and special entities whereas everything would seem to indicate that there is no entity or homogeneous substantiality when it comes to understanding transitions both within and outside the training system.

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[19] This is a priority area today, sometimes within the educational system itself, which some people interpret as being a way of reducing "the figures" of unemployment by shifting the time when people enter the labour market(s) or when they leave the compulsory education system

[20] Developments compiled in the European Eurydice report, Education and initial training systems in the Member States of the European Community, Brussels 1991 and recent publications of CEDEFOP.

[21] This is particularly the case in France with the development and recent restructuring (1993) of apprenticeship which in no way can reflect the reality concerning the flows of apprentices, most of whom go on to level V qualifications.

On this subject the main studies refer to a certain number of fixed ideas about the role and status of training. It is presented as an unavoidable means of accompanying socio-economic or technological changes or even as a way of guaranteeing economic growth. Most of the time this position leads to the functioning and finality of vocational training systems being conceived in line with the need to adapt to changes. In the same way it involves adopting a critical position vis-à-vis existing systems which are often described as "inefficient" when it comes to generating skills in line with the real needs of production[22]. This position often implies a form of individual understanding of the causes of employment, explained on the basis of the distance between individuals and employment and the characteristics of these individuals against the background of the characteristics of training. It is increasingly expressed by using the term "employability" when reference is made to situations of unemployment and the anticipated situation of some young people before they even enter working life (hence the use of concepts such as rehabilitation, re-socialisation, integration). However, this concept of employability is actually critical to access since it is difficult to establish it and has ideological connotations.

In the case of training, we have seen that this demand has led to the sustained and growing use of systematic and diverse ways of evaluating existing systems. This move, which has not been adopted everywhere, is taking place on and between different levels of school organisation. In general, this evaluation focuses on the environmental indicators of the system, its costs, its functioning and its results. The triangle, cost-functioning-results, backed or not by environmental indicators, provides the foundations on which the training system is evaluated and normally each of the indicators (particularly those having to do with results) is selected in accordance with the declared goals of the system. The degree of "efficacy" remains the central pivot in the evaluation of systems in a large number of countries. This trend confirms the predominance of the problem of specifically vocational integration compared with what is expected of the training system.

This concern about adapting training systems also extends to duration (insistence on the need for "life-long training") and to scope .

Thus, one common point in current positions stresses the training role of work situations, forms of "co-operation" and alternance training as well as the diversification of training needs. This is a good indication of the current and future issues which will confront the system of in-school vocational training in respect of its links with the production system and any changes in those links. This forces us to examine a certain number of dimensions which are not systematically addressed in the analyses of occupational transition.

The transformation of links between knowledge and practices triggered by changes in the production systems seem to justify the massive and insistent use of the concept of alternance which, in itself, does not reflect the true nature of this scheme in most countries (OECD, CÉREQ, 1994). This interest testifies to the belief in the high degree of efficiency of the type of know-how acquired within a company or in a work situation. This is an old issue which has met with considerable enthusiasm in respect of the forms of organisation and identification of the players in vocational training as well as the necessary links to be established or strengthened depending on the national situations between school and work. This need is considered as a guarantee for the adjustment of methods and contents of qualifications acquired during training. Thus, beyond institutional or collective bargaining provision for the mobilisation of different players around the function of producing specifications and qualifications, we can also consider the question of vocational qualifications on the basis of the societal mode required for the form (in school or not) of the acquisition and transmission of this knowledge. Typologies of vocational training systems within the European Union are mainly based on this type of distinction (cf. box 2).

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[22] This position is particularly obvious in comparative reports aiming to give a forward looking analysis of training systems (particularly in the synthesis report on " vocational training scenarios for some Member States of the European Community, CEDEFOP 1990. By contrast, they do not highlight the difficulties encountered by the world of production

Furthermore, there is a general increase in the use of information and in the need to define informational needs on the level of the European Community[23]. This information, irrespective of whether it describes the number of people who have undergone training or unemployment or whether it is used as basis for political decisions, is presented as an inevitable trend in the development of different structures and their mutual links. Many European programmes compile theme-related data for informational and consultative purposes. Some Member States of the European Community have been compiling data on vocational training for one or two decades.

For a certain number of countries (France, United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal), the studies stress the fact that numerous reforms of the vocational training systems have above all aimed to attract more students and improve their image[24]. They stress the ambivalence of this preoccupation particularly with the unequal social links based on the apposition of real "culture" and ancillary culture or knowledge. We have, therefore, to understand the reasons for the lack (or inversely) of credibility on the basis of links which emerge between school institutions and professional environments and on the basis of policies within education "such as finding a solution to school drop-outs which leads to a fundamental contradiction: improving the image of training and some occupations whilst at the same time using vocational training as a means of combating school failure; this is the case for most of the countries concerned).

Finally, it is important to point out the need to view (to see as equivalent) Community vocational training activities in the context of two major axes: firstly, on the basis of extending and developing reflection on the European dimension to education and, secondly on the basis of the need to set up a political framework for the medium and long-term programmes of "linking" initial vocational and continuing vocational training. For example in Portugal (law of 1986) and in Spain (law of 1990) the need is stressed to begin modernising and improving vocational training in order to make "a rewarding contribution to the European economy". In the United Kingdom, the restructuring of qualifications is inspired by the same concern as are the legislative provisions adopted in Sweden (law of 1991).

The subject of internationalising training schemes is mainly based even today on mutual information practices rather than on efforts to bring about real equivalence.

3.3 Transition within vocational training systems in some Member States of the European Community

3.3.1 The explanations usually given for the differences between the systems

In order to identify the reasons for the differences in the organisation of occupational transition by analysing training systems, which merely involves reading what there is, research draws on the comparison of political, institutional and collective bargaining areas and focuses, more particularly, on the global organisation and on the problems of diversification - standardisation and uniformity of the system. It is on the basis of this combination, the adjustment and regulation of these factors, that the main observations and results concerning types of transition towards employment are interpreted.

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[23] cf. various European reports and, more particularly, those by CEDEFOP (Vocational Training Journal, no. 1/1993).

[24] In the United Kingdom, for example, the method of approval (standardisation of vocational skills) reflects this desire to increase the "standing" of vocational training.

3.3.1.1 The institutional aspects linked to vocational training systems

The comparison of transition within training systems in the European Union implies that some internal parameters are stressed, criteria which are normally likely to provide insight into the organisational structures of transition. These parameters are mainly linked to the format and organisation of training structures and to the way in which in-school and vocational programmes are set up. We have focused on the first of these and, more specifically, on the question of educational and vocational guidance.

a) The differences observed in terms of format are defined at several levels of the organisation. Firstly, they have to do with the extension and the nature of the standardisation of the training system (in the sense that the main organs are structured as one sole entity), particularly in terms of curricular evaluation and types of certification. France, for example, has a centralised structure for defining strands and types of validation. This degree of standardisation, which covers the problems of deconcentration and decentralisation, is viewed as the main factor which shapes the types of transition within the training system. Comparisons of the ways in which educational policies are enforced, are undertaken and interpreted depending on the degree of independence of the institutions, the system itself, the links between public and private education, the structure of administrative organisation and finally the policies for organising "transition" in each country.

b) Differences then appear depending on the degree of standardisation and stratification of the trajectories and the relations between the stratification and the individual characteristics normally used to analyse distribution (gender, age, social background, school variables). This stratification is based on a time dimension in selection depending on the way in which the curricula are distributed between the different levels and strands. This also reveals the differences linked to the impermeability and rigidity of orientation and mobility within training and, finally, to the level of flexibility in transition within systems and the extension of institutional support for individual trajectories and status.

   Furthermore, updating them helps to compare their structure in terms of forms of social recognition of the hierarchy between these strands. Awareness of this hierarchy, however, raises more difficulties than would have been expected. Generally speaking, the work on training systems base the impact of this hierarchy on the forms of transition between general and vocational education. Now there are more subtle forms of hierarchy (depending on the options, the strands, the vocational sections, the institutions) which contribute towards the differentiated organisation of the transition towards employment. The studies on European training systems take little account of this type of category which would, however, qualify to a large degree social analyses and help to restructure the typologies normally used for school groups.

c) In fact, the questions linked to hierarchy in training strands have more to do with the organisation of the processes of educational and vocational guidance. Depending on the structure and meaning given to this organisation, educational and vocational guidance is often based on the links between strands - qualification - social structure. All the same, the studies on the subject of educational and vocational guidance focus, for the most part, on the purely internal aspects of the training system (structuring of trajectories, management of influx and distribution) or in the case of guidance itself (analysis of procedures, educational influence of orientation, preparation and information on the putting together of choices). There is a major divide between the school and occupational channels of orientation whereas some national structures (Sweden, Germany) confirm the continuity of an orientation process on the scale of the existing process of integration.

   In fact, when considering the process of orientation on the social level as a process by means of which a given generation undertakes its journey from the initial family environment to the adult professional world, there is no need to differentiate between educational and vocational guidance. In this context, these two dimensions constitute one and the same process and ensure in their continuity the link between the different life cycles. They must, therefore, be seen as the final stage in "social and occupational integration". This reflects the socio-economic factors which determine the division of labour and the forms of socialisation recommended by society, particularly by those who pass through school. This means that orientation can be broken down into a technical and administrative strand which meets the needs of the labour force and a psychological and scientific strand in respect of the evaluation of individual profiles.

This first macro-analytical approach (consensual approach) in fact defines orientation as the overall social mechanisms of varying terms of types and level involved in the transition from initial training to employment (in the widest sense). The link between the vocational and educational dimension of the process of guidance nevertheless testifies to the special nature of each of these, particularly concerning their mutual determination and the manner in which they are set up and institutionalised. This development is tantamount to a change in the socio-occupational conditions for integration and, at a certain time, affects the contribution by schools to the social and vocational guidance of individuals. Thus, in the progressive institutionalisation of the process of vocational guidance we arrive at the apparent setting up of a highly specific form of educational guidance. This becomes possible as the majority of people in a given generation experience an increasingly long and systematic period of schooling. The idea of guidance which was initially developed not really outside school but solely at the end of school now also includes the internal functioning of the educational system.

d) However, this is not the case in all countries. Situations differ depending on the goals set for the services and procedures of guidance[25] (of course specialised services) and depending on the goals of guidance activities (information, evaluation, selection, assistance, placement ...). The studies, particularly the ones from the European Community[26], which use a prescriptive comparison of educational and vocational guidance systems, seem to identify three trends (which have been reinterpreted in institutional terms and thus are sources of differentiation):

- the most frequent belief is that the young person must play an active role in his orientation (non-imposed choice),
- that orientation (in the wider sense) must result from a continuous review which is an integral part of the educational process,
- that orientation implies a partnership along the same lines as alternance.

The differences identified in the comparative analyses stress the situation which places guidance within organisation and tends to view it as a challenge since it is very closely linked to the socio-economic development of work organisation whilst at the same time also incorporating at a very early stage the existing forms of socialisation. Hence, orientation appears as an unavoidable means of legitimising social hierarchies, particularly by drawing support from scientific foundations.

In fact, orientation is the formalised tool of a social process for socio-occupational integration which moves beyond it by means of a certain degree of development in the technical and social division of labour. This formalisation, which began with the emergence of school education, become a tool by means of which attempts are made to handle and strengthen this process of massing. Orientation is not an isolated phenomenon, a simple technical function in the school training system but rather a deep and dynamic process for social regulation. It is, therefore, full of challenges when it comes to organising occupational transition.

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[25] In Germany there is a clear distinction between educational guidance services and vocational guidance services provided by the different bodies whereas in Belgium and in Ireland the three types of assistance (school, occupational, personal assistance) are provided by one in the same body.

[26] In fact there are few recent studies on the process of guidance in Europe from the point of view of this last angle (aside from a report involving an international comparison for the EEC dating back to 1987, an issue of the French journal, Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle - vol 19., no. 3, Sept 90, the Eurydice network in 1991 and an article by J. M. Leclercq in 1997).

e) In this context, major importance is attributed to the question of school programmes and, more indirectly, to the knowledge which can be transferred to occupational activities. The preference for broader training has given very special meaning to the type of skills to be acquired and the way in which these skills are evaluated. This may involve a desire to stress the implicit predominance of an adequacy model which is explicitly criticised and may explain the few links established between the other forms of transition (transition "outside employment" which people are endeavouring today to incorporate into the descriptive and significant variables of the occupational transition which are reflected in the growing interest in socialisation approaches).

In conjunction with training systems, the question of school programmes is examined from the angle of how they are set up, enforced and extended. The differences observed have been interpreted as forms of structuring the transition towards employment. The creation of programmes and specifications depending on the type of political organisation (national, local[27]) as well as on the relative efficiency of the procedures for creating diplomas and contents, are normally evaluated on the basis of industrial and technological change and the formal definition of qualification needs. There is no real consideration of this within the internal dimension of the training system in line with the types or forms of management which are part and parcel of it. However, the definition and the creation of school diplomas are sometimes, as is the case in France and Italy, mainly under the control of the internal management of state training systems (vocational bodies merely play an advisory role). The implementation of these programmes brings with it some significant differences mainly in respect of the educational mode selected for each cycle (distance learning, modular programmes, structuring of school sequences, validation of these forms within the framework of schemes linked to efforts to help school drop-outs, a growing tendency towards the individualisation of paths). Furthermore, we can see that depending on the occupational branches (and the degree of centrality and its quantitative importance), the procedures for creating and defining diplomas and programmes vary considerably.

From one country to another and also within the same national context, this dimension which has to do with the creation and the definition of diplomas and their contents is considered as a major characteristic in differentiating between the forms of individual transition. It is against this backdrop that most evaluations of vocational training systems are made. They examine the quantitative and qualitative schemes at the end of training. They are used as the differentiation criteria for comparative purposes of all the ways, whether significant or not, in which certification and the holding of minimum qualifications are organised in respect of gaining access to the labour market(s)[28].

f) The conditions for the extension and possible adaptation of training contents are factors which are analysed in all the main comparative studies. This "consensus" re-examines the social choice of forms of acquisition and transfer of know-how and more specifically occupational know-how, which is normally undertaken by means of the concepts of skills and qualification. They are at the centre of political concerns and are considered as a specific means of evaluating activities and reforms as if henceforth it were accepted that in a context of global competition between economies, the quality of education and training depends on this to a major and priority degree. The major and ongoing criticism can be expressed in the following way: the training system is no longer able to train young people for all areas of occupational life.

It seems, nevertheless, that the problem of the social structure of vocational training focuses on the possible benefits to be derived from increasing it. The choices which can be observed in the different Member States of the European Community tended rather to adopt this preceding formula when it produced good results (in schools in Sweden and Italy and under the dual system in German-speaking countries). The other solutions, apprenticeships or full-time in-school training, provide support for groups with special difficulties. It seems, furthermore, that the desire for "partnership" between those responsible for vocational training in the school system and occupational circles has led first of all to an increase in the number of initiatives for school pupils[29]. All countries use this type of scheme. In Italy the organisation of these schemes encounters a certain number of obstacles.

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[27] In this context the link between vocational training and local development is an important theme in the work conducted by the European Community (no. 2/1993 of the Vocational Training Journal of CEDEFOP).

[28] We should perhaps distinguish between the specific forms on the market called "internal" and "external".

3.3.1.2 Taking into consideration individual characteristics

Occupational transition, or at least the paths within training systems, can be characterised in different ways. We have seen that the description and understanding of the organisation of transition may be based on institutional or organisational elements. This approach, however, is deemed to be incomplete by some studies which, in the interest of "exhaustive" interpretation, also incorporate individual data.

The addition of individual variables to the determining factors for school careers is particularly significant when it comes to studying how educational guidance functions. They show, for example, that as far as "gender" is concerned, several internal phenomena seem to influence the figures of orientation both in respect of decisions and applications made and in respect of sectoral breakdown into the occupational sections. Furthermore, school value (which is normally defined on the basis of results and the school age of individuals) seems to be of major importance for this process, but not of total importance since guidance does not lead to a perfect division into disjointed sub-groups based on their school results. The factor, age, by contrast has a different impact depending on the level of the course attended and on the individual's situation vis-à-vis compulsory schooling. Finally, the socio-cultural background has an impact or at least is of undeniable importance for school trajectories both in terms of quantitative and qualitative factors.

It is important to take individual data into account when examining transitions both inside and outside the training system. All the same, this cannot be the only form of interpretation required, particularly in the case of comparative studies. As has already been stressed, taking into account these individual variables raises major problems in terms of equivalence as soon as they are viewed via the structures and organisations in the different countries. A commonly used criterion such as age does not have the same significance in different contexts. Although it could be used as an indication of the pace and type of training given, of the degree of success, its quality depends in the final instance on the conditions within which school careers are structured[30].

3.3.1.3 The currently proposed typologies

The predominance of the German model (dual system) is a characteristic which is common to all efforts of transnational classification both in respect of the typologies proposed and the normative authority which is normally attributed to it despite the many criticisms levelled at this kind of model.

Hence, a first sub-group contains the so-called "German speaking" countries (Germany, Switzerland, Austria ...) where the vocational training system is based on dual and school organisation. A second sub-group covers English-speaking countries (England, Scotland, Ireland ...) where vocational training is almost exclusively organised by companies. A third sub-group of countries in which vocational training is mainly based within the school system (France, Italy, Belgium, Spain ...) and finally a last sub-group made up of countries which are in the process of developing vocational training systems which are not yet structured or organised (Portugal, Greece). This typology is used in numerous comparisons. Is it satisfactory?

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[29] The most frequent and oldest formula is that of periods of practical training in companies.

[30] For example age is an important indicator of the way in which schooling functions in school context in which little use is made of repeating years as is the case in the United Kingdom, Denmark or Sweden and where the institutional differences are minimal.

This question is raised since the type of classification varies from country to country firstly in respect of the indicators used for equivalence and, secondly, in the actual choice of these indicators. For example, Rault (1994) uses several forms of typology depending on the specific objective criteria: the index for attendance of vocational training and the link to its efficiency, attendance being understood here to mean the attractiveness or not of this type of education; the second index revealing a classification in line with the forms of partnership and co-responsibility for the implementation and management of this type of vocational training. This double classification shows that, depending on the choice of indicators, the typologies and regroupings will differ to the extent that it will not be possible to compile groups of countries with similar trends. There do not seem to be any laws, rationales or regulatory principles in respect of the structure of training systems, the production of these systems and links with other aspects of social and economic life.

How then should we assess the validity of the areas of comparison which are the basis for most European studies which draw on a "socio-geographical" north-north or south-south axis? The way in which this type of classical differentiation between the different national configurations in Europe is legitimised tends to develop into a precondition for the creation of typologies (in the choice of countries for comparison, in the common descriptions of the development stage of existing systems) and, finally, the dominant theoretical and analytical proposals in work on the organisation of occupational transition.

3.3.2 Measuring the "success" of transition

One of the major tools used in (educational or other) policies linked to the organisation of occupational transition (in the widest sense) is to develop ways and criteria of evaluating its relative "success". From their point of view, this usually means linking the numbers leaving the education system or training system with the level of unemployment and examining the "success" of transition within the very training system.

a) The first of these two dimensions has to do with a deterministic vision which has greatly contributed to establishing an almost mechanical link between failure at school and failure at work (a vision which has since been considerably revised as a result of some contributions by social sciences". It is along the same lines that we can identify and understand, at the same time, the foundations on which the definition of "success of transitions" is based. Occupational failure, to the extent that it can be clearly identified, is one interpretation of "success" of transition when it leads to situations of unemployment or job insecurity. Today despite the changes which have had a qualitative effect on the period of "transition", access to job security has become a distinctive criterion for the success of people's career paths.

   However, the reality of the impact of this criterion (in terms of reserves concerning the frequency of its use and its true ideological meaning) has contributed to strengthening the fuzziness which surrounds the concept of "success", which is rarely explained in these studies. In fact, there are very few cases in which the concept of success is linked to aspects other than employment. Some suggestions stress more subjective considerations of "success" in transition (such as job satisfaction, social integration and occupational socialisation).

   Along the same lines, special attention paid to variations in "success" focuses on the link between the results of the training system and unemployment with general consideration of "especially vulnerable" sub-groups. This position actually involves defining, in a normative manner, the conditions and characteristics of "successful transition" in respect of the only criterion put forward above and of measuring the most extreme situations in terms of this divide.

b) By taking into account the internal dimension of the training system, the "success" of transitions or school paths is most often linked to the subject of "failure at school". As in the preceding case, the ways of defining success at school are not free of reduction or even simplification or inversely are understood in many different ways. All the same, the transformation of the term "failure at school" into a category for comparative analysis becomes highly problematic.

It becomes problematic from the time when the interpretation, the choice and identification of the indicators used[31] in a differentiated manner within a national context stops any consideration of the relative dimension of "failure at school". Its definition will, therefore, depend on the socio-historic and institutional framework within which it is seen. Nor is it completely foreign to internal efforts to prevent or fight against "failure at school". The levels of repeats, although widely used, cannot for example be taken as a standardised indication of the degree of "failure at school" since some countries (Denmark, Finland, Greece, United Kingdom and Sweden) mainly use automatic promotion to the next year (Paul 1996).

Finally, let us stress the recent shifts both in factual and conceptual terms in the problem of relative "failure at school". The fact of viewing it not only in strict educational or cognitive terms but as more directly linked to individual trajectories, implies a rapid assimilation of the category of failure involving wider dimensions than the school framework alone. The hegemony granted to compulsory initial training, therefore, fuels the paradox according to which the more "school failure" is reduced, the greater the social stigmatisation of those people who could not benefit from the validation and certification of minimum schooling. Consequently, equating "success" of transitions (so-called school or post-school) with "success at school" cannot in any way be considered an adequate yardstick. It is, however, the one which is most widely used beyond the methodological and theoretical limits which its exclusive use would imply.

Some conclusions about the incorporation of vocational training systems into the analysis of occupational transition:

Can the term "occupational transition" also be used to cover the period of so-called initial vocational training? We have seen that the educational system was the site for specific trajectories and paths and that the organisational, institutional and even social provisions of that period are neither fixed nor fully reproducible. There are specific challenges within training systems, challenges which cannot be strictly defined on the basis of this one dimension alone.

From this angle, the changes which affect the numbers of people completing training, in a quantitative and qualitative manner, cannot be isolated from the development of later occupational transition, transition understood here within the restrictive framework of integration. A major problem even today stems from the fact that too often attempts are made to explain, analyse and evaluate the conditions of occupational transition on the basis of the individual characteristics of training only. This makes it necessary to adapt training systems to the qualification needs of the production systems. It is only by beginning to define what "occupational qualification" is that we could perhaps try and find an answer to this problem. It, therefore, seems that the fundamental issue in respect of occupational transition which begins in the sphere of training which, is included in links between the educational system and production system. Aside from the difficulty of defining and identifying these links, it is dynamic and structuring characteristics that should also be considered when analysing a subject which has unclear contours and which is constantly changing.

Taking into account this procedural and discontinuous dimension when analysing the organisation of occupational transition must today define the frameworks which develop in line with the subject "integration transition" itself. From the point of view of vocational training, we should perhaps in future clearly establish a distinction between the functioning of organisation, the contents of educational policies and the sometimes erroneous interpretation of the existing system. This system must take on board a certain number of economic and ideological constraints (policy of raising the level of training, desire to validate vocational education, development of apprenticeship/alternance) linked or legitimised by new social challenges. It also contributes to "reproducing" the social hierarchies and to legitimising or even generating social inequality although one of the major goals throughout Europe is to reduce these inequalities.

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[31] These indicators normally identify a process of premature school leaving, school absenteeism, high levels of repeats of years as well as inadequate schooling certified at the end of compulsory education.

Box 1:

Longitudinal support

The use of "appropriate methods and tools for diachronic analysis (cohort tracking, longitudinal approach, biographical analysis) was the subject of a certain consensus in France. It is even likely that it was the subject of occupational transition which helped to stress very clearly the interest and the difficulties of this type of tool. Its appearance during the 1970s is generally interpreted as the need to review the classical methods of the social sciences in a quantitative and structuring manner and to move it towards more qualitative and microanalytical elements. This movement, which was common to various disciplines in human sciences, was particularly significant in the sociology of education.

The frequent use today of biographical analytical methods aims to overcome two types of difficulty. Firstly, the difficulties involved in the practical and methodological collection of data: this takes up the problem mentioned already, a problem which confronts many research scientists when they attempt to identify and define the "stages" (usually represented by taking a starting point and a finishing point as well as an exact duration) and the different characteristics in the process of occupational transition (particularly the outside or non-occupational characteristics). Secondly, these analyses have produced a certain number of concepts, history or life story, trajectories, channels, careers, biographies, to quote only the most widespread which, when you look beyond their apparent homogeneity, all have specific features which have to do with the application of the longitudinal models which they are based on.

The main research on this subject is shifting more and more towards approaches in terms of life history and trajectories. Since the first seems to have undergone greater developments than the second, it attempts to link the special features of what an individual has experienced to a social category and use this against the backdrop of the social determining factors which are supposed to shape individual destinies. Most frequently used within the framework of sociological studies, it can be broken down into three models[32] which formalise biographical information in very different ways. Trajectory analysis aims rather to interpret individual paths with a view to formalising these types of paths according to their frequency or special character.

In the case of transitions within the training system, the sociology of education has recently made use of this type of qualitative model. The enquiries, quantitative studies and surveys (cohort tracking) still remain in the majority and make it possible today to compare the nature and meaning of "school" transitions with the situation of cohorts in earlier years (with the first surveys by INED starting in 1962). This type of analysis is also required for individuals leaving the training system (since 1970 with research by CÉREQ).

These recompiled data have helped to stress the importance of analysis of the individual, social and geographical aspects of school and occupational trajectories in a context in the training and education systems in most European countries training and education systems began their process of development and extension. In these countries, this type of survey has also helped to raise fundamental questions which have to do with the sociology of current education, the history of social inequalities in curricula, in educational and vocational guidance, in the contents of educational policies and in successive reforms.

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[32] On the one hand there is the model of biographical story or life story. The work by Lewis O. illustrates this first type of approach. Furthermore, the model of "series of events in the life cycle" (classical approach of demographs and some economists such as Kessler and Masson). Finally the model of the "succession of positions" or curricula, commonly used in educational science.

Box 2:

Synthetic elements relative to alternance within the framework of European vocational training

The observation made in most comparative studies of alternance identifies the great diversity in national situations. The use of some basic typologies is based on differentiations linked to the form of interaction between school, training and in-company training, to the definition of the degree of institutionalisation of the school-based vocational training system. Depending on their varying combinations, the goals of alternance (strictly educational and economic) constitute a major differentiation factor. Three groups can be identified, each with its own special developments.

- The first has to do with all German speaking countries and uses a "dual" system for organising vocational training. This deals with varying degrees of success in terms of the recent trends with which it is confronted (increase in the number of people undergoing general and university studies, later integration into apprenticeship after secondary education, restructuring of the heterogeneity of apprentices, types of training and possibilities for placement in companies depending on their size).

The following group includes countries in which the vocational training system functions almost exclusively in a school environment (Belgium, France, Spain, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden). The forms and provisions of alternance vary very much from one context to another. Their developments are characterised both by a desire to modernise or develop apprenticeship or by a desire to introduce more alternance periods into school training (full time or part time). Finally, the use of alternance could be developed as a way of combating unemployment and focusing to a greater degree on target groups in difficulty.

- The last group contains those countries which do not really have a structured alternance vocational training system (English-speaking countries, Portugal, Greece). Given the lack of institutionalisation of vocational training it seems in some cases that experimentation and efforts to develop apprenticeship are left to the initiative of companies. In this sense it is possible to link these to the first category. In other cases, the developments observed stress a generalisation of the schemes which is not yet systematic.

This broad typology (the cases of Denmark and Norway are for example common to the first two categories) does not take account some special features (such as responsibility for training, the degree of workforce mobility, recruitment and promotion practices within companies, the links between employers and employees) which seem to play an important role in the conditions of co-operation between school and company as well as in the utilisation of the different training channels.

4. THE ORGANISATION OF TRANSITION IN THE COMPARISONS

Beginning with the idea that the area of research, young people, is only a nominal creation which cannot be detached from the overall social entity (Rose 1994), we are taking a socio-economic look at the labour market which sees the link between personal processes and collective processes as "a complex intertwining of training, activity and inactivity". We could say here that a great deal has still to be done in this field because we did not find any international comparisons which directly focus on the organisation of transition. We should remember here, as has already been stressed in the first two sections, that this problem is only just beginning to emerge on the European level although it has been the subject of reflection in national situations. The work commissioned by CEDEFOP, which is the subject of this report, testifies to that. It is directly linked to the general data about the European context: increase in "structural" unemployment, economic conditions and need for harmonisation which lead to the identification of research subjects which are likely to simplify the explanation of national convergences and differences, to fuel theoretical fundamental constructs but also to produce results which can be used by European decision makers.

Some studies have addressed the organisation of internal labour markets which examine the fields of occupational relations, work organisation and qualifications as well as some aspects of the links between vocational training and working life. Recent studies on subjects other than transition have identified the organisation of so-called secondary markets which are growing and which are even challenging the approach based on a breakdown into secondary and external markets. This was the starting point for our analysis. We are, therefore, going to propose in this last section a list of the disciplinary approaches and subjects which can be used as references when studying the organisation of transition, this having been meant from the outset (Rose 1994) in the somewhat restricted sense of "occupational transition". This mainly has to do with links to employment and the different levels it involves, from the individual to the global social level.

The leitmotif in this section will be the main subjects encountered which we felt were useful when analysing the organisation of transition because they take up the very challenge itself whilst endeavouring to explain the nature and the meaning of the shaping of work in employment and its recent interpretations (Rose/Friot et al 1996). Without claiming to be exhaustive, we have identified four main research approaches which each constitute a special dimension:

- The evaluation of public policies for employment and integration to which could be added some training policies which generate national studies and supra-national comparative perspectives (Chapter 1).
- The approach involving identity construction by means of studying labour markets and the role of qualifications, a vast area which takes in work which assigns a central role to methodology by using biographies or individual trajectories and those which study the social areas for qualification, in particular those created by professional markets. Reading these studies against the backdrop of OOT may lead to a challenging of the division between internal labour markets and external labour markets (Chapter 2).
- The analysis of institutions, work organisations and practices which organise the occupational transition. These issues are scarcely touched on in the studies which we consulted. This encouraged us to perhaps open up a new field of research (Chapter 3).
- The analysis of the transformations in the production system which lead in our eyes to fundamental changes to the shaping of work in employment (Chapter 4).
- Continuing training, therefore, functions as a transversal subject vis-à-vis the four first ones (Chapter 5).

The selected levels vary: in terms of players, methodologies, subjects and finally the problem. By touching on one or more of them in each chapter, we wish greater attention to be given to these different aspects in research on these matters. In so doing we are aware that we are suggesting backdrops for the formulation of hypotheses which may encourage a comparative study of the organisation of occupational transition within the framework of a societal approach (Maurice 1989).

4.1 The effects of public employment policies

The dominant approach is ex post valuation. Beyond the challenges in terms of the criteria which govern these evaluations, which are usually commissioned by public authorities and which are not within our direct terms of reference, you can still read there about the role of local authorities in the organisation of occupational transition. One of the most obvious results was that states are assuming an increasingly important role in the management of the workforce by means of the voluntary policies for occupational and social integration and the recent interpretations of the rules for salaries, including social protection and working hours.

4.1.1 From employment to non-employment

Public authorities play a dual role in the passage from employment to unemployment: to guarantee the enforcement of rules which are the result of the balance of power and take on a structural character and to promote measures, which often result from industrial relations which have helped to produce an agreement. Two examples may throw some light on the problem of organising occupational transition in the passage from employment to non-employment. We also have to bring in the aspect of retraining already mentioned in the first section.

4.1.1.1 *Individual and collective dismissal*

Beginning with a somewhat institutionalist economic approach, the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin produced a comparison of the Member States in the European Union in 1992. Mosley (1992) analyses the regulatory framework for individual and collective redundancy on the basis of a stocktaking of the similarities and differences between countries in respect of the existence or lack of administrative approval of redundancies and of the existence of unemployment benefits. One of the goals of this study was to report on the European directive 75/129 which aims to harmonise the laws of Member States in respect of collective redundancies. Using Eurostat as a source, this study establishes a link between adjustments on the macro and microeconomic levels and examines job security and so-called involuntary unemployment. It concludes that there are major differences linked more particularly to the existence of the fixed-term contract (Belgium, France), to the existence of administrative approval of redundancy (Netherlands, Greece, Portugal, Spain), to the characteristics of redundancy payments made by all countries studied at the time except Germany and to the characteristics of company size.

The study by Reissert/Schmid (1992) endeavours to identify the links between active employment policies and the system of unemployment benefits. It distinguishes between countries which have unemployment insurance and benefits such as France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece and countries which combine unemployment insurance and a minimum guaranteed wage such as Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In all Member States it is necessary to have been in employment in order to obtain unemployment benefits or unemployment insurance. However, this period varies from 360 days in Germany to 78 days for the under 18s in Belgium. The period, for which benefits can be drawn, also varies from country to country. Here it is the link between the role of public policies and workforce training which should be examined by addressing the source of funding for the transition period. We could also draw conclusions about transitions integrated into salaried employment and transitions which are financed from taxes or savings (Friot 1996). This would help us to better understand the division of tasks between the state and companies when it comes to workforce management and, by extension, the changes in salaried employment from country to country. In all cases it would seem that the management of transition periods stems from a division of tasks between these two players.

4.1.1.2 *Retirement*

Since industrial restructuring in the 1960s, changes have been made to the passage from employment to retirement. A transition period has emerged between these two which affects the workforce described as "ageing workers". The question to be examined could have to do with a new breakdown of life (Hubert 1994): from 0-25 years school, from 25-55 years employment and 55-80 years retirement. But things become more complex when we examine transition and, more particularly, the passage from activity to inactivity. In the report "Work, labour, ageing" (1994) which stems from a European colloquium and draws on MISEP sources (European Information System on Employment Policies), one of the first observations is not a reduction in work but in the period of activity recognised as work during the last decade. Although the borderline between employment and retirement is still marked in Portugal, Greece and Italy, there is a global trend in other countries for an effacing of this borderline.

Guillemard analyses the situation in European countries on the basis of four main phases in public authorities: the first is characterised by the restructuring undertaken in order to cope with the reduction in work available, the second by discrimination based on age in order to replace "the old" with "the young", the third by progressive ceasing of activity with the development of part-time work and the fourth by the slowing down of this process and the tendency to prolong the period of activity. A different regulatory mechanism of exits from the labour market has established itself: retirement systems which lay down the age of retirement leave little room for flexibility in entering inactivity, particularly during the last 10 years. The forms of transition towards inactivity are unemployment, early retirement or part-time work, invalidity, above all in countries other than Portugal, Greece and Italy where retirement continues to be the main passage as well as in Denmark. Early retirement systems have seen considerable changes in how they are financed: in France, for example, there has been a return to unemployment insurance so as not to overburden the retirement funds. The major problem continues to be negotiation between the players, the state and the social partners in order to decide who will assume the financial burden. Part-time work coupled with lower remuneration is another form of passage towards retirement (OECD, 1995). It should not be forgotten that two-thirds of part-time jobs are held by women, particularly in the secondary and services sectors, which brings with it major disruptions in their careers. They leave the labour market at a later stage than men and fewer women undergo transition in the form of invalidity. Unemployment, as well as discouragement, are forms of non employment at that stage in life. Salaried employees seize every opportunity which they view as "advantageous" but there is still an identity crisis linked to the devaluing of the older salaried worker. According to Gaullier (in "Work, labour, ageing", 1994), there will be a decade of transition which will be characterised by general flexibility after what he calls a second career (after 40 years of age). It would be interesting to link these different elements with socio-occupational categories in order to see what types of qualification will be affected in which sectors of activity.

4.1.2 Occupational and social integration

Integration programmes could be viewed as a type of unemployment management, particularly long term unemployment or as back-up placement measures. In the case of young people, we will focus on the analyses by CÉREQ (Bouder et alii, 1993, 94, 95) which, in the French context, examined the problems linked to the development of public integration policies. Based on the observation that these mainly qualitative evaluations are endogenous and intrinsic to the measures, the authors do, however, stress two trends: the ones which focus on the schemes and local actors and the ones which focus on the effects of these policies on the paths of young people (Bouder et alii, 1993, in respect of the evaluation of the individualised training credits). These evaluations "*implicitly stress the constructed character of public policies, a construct which is undertaken by means of the way in which the players accept this*". Beyond the specific problems of evaluating public policies (which schemes involving which degree of efficacy and for whom?), the authors stress the limited character of existing reports which are often the result of a public commission compared with a possible interpretation of the ex post sense of the schemes and the link which there may be with their ex ante goals (Bouder/Mansuy/Werquin 1995). At all events, these evaluations show that the public policies which involve integration programmes for France but also for various other countries "*hope to maintain and/or create a division between young people*". When we know that most of the schemes for young people have been extended during the 1990s to the long-term unemployed, we begin to understand the importance of these programmes firstly, because they divide up the population, secondly because they organise and delay access to employment and thirdly because they are accompanied by schemes to lighten the burden on employers. Hence, they affect the overall links to employment for these groups within salaried employment.

In order to deal fully with this issue we have to examine both empirical research into the impact of existing or developing rules with a view to social policies and, more particularly, the aspect of the origin of resources, salaries, as is in the case of unemployment benefits in France or the allocation of more ore less tax-funded assistance. In global terms the role of the public authorities may be examined by means of the rules they produce in respect of work contracts and employment aid programmes which are granted to companies. We have to identify the different levels involved be they local, regional, national or European. The majority involve evaluation. The results throw light above all on how these schemes operate and examine the determining factors in the evaluation and the establishment of these policies. Their scale reflects both the concerns of public authorities knowing the effects of their actions but also the importance of transition, its use in the restructuring of forms of employment by means of the institutionalisation of its organisation and the transfer of burdens in respect of managing some of the workforce from companies to public authorities.

4.2 The individual or "group" approach

In the fragmented universe of the sociology of occupations and the economics of work and training, we have identified three fields of research which could help to throw light on the organisation of occupational transition from a specific angle.

4.2.1 Individual trajectories

The individual approach, which was already mentioned in the second section, has numerous advantages and disadvantages. It is essential in order to link the two aspects of the organisation of transition: the time involved in the process itself and the description of the actual situation by means of which people access working life. Its main aim is to identify trends over relatively long periods and to ascertain the constant factors which enable them to involve some groups of society in the changing links between work and employment. In our opinion there are two groups of work behind these approaches:

Longitudinal analyses which give preference to the time aspect (Giret/Espinasse 1997), the limits of which were mostly identified in the second chapter. Some studies are shaped by the backdrops suggested by the job search theory which is based on the idea of imperfect knowledge of the neo-classical labour market or that of the filter which postulates a link between the format and productivity of economists. The question, therefore, remains as to the articulation between the structural effect and the individual effect (Pottier 1993). Furthermore, individual strategies are not really considered from the methodological point of view. Other studies beginning from a more sociological angle give priority to context over biography or endeavour to understand the path as the product of a dual movement between the actions of individuals and the social determinism of structures (Giret/Espinasse 1997). A socio-economic approach is, therefore, more interactionist. From the methodological point of view and if we wish to undertake international comparisons, we may encounter considerable difficulties which qualify these studies and make it possible to state that they cannot be used unless supplemented by other approaches: choice of cohorts, reliability of definition criteria, size of samples, process of categorisation use etc. "*We have to stop using this as a source for analysing economic developments on the labour market of young people*" (Pottier 1993). We should give preference to studies on integration and the working population since a relatively long time is needed to harmonise the establishment of the area under review without mentioning the diverse issues linked to their funding.

Biographical analyses of a more qualitative nature (Planas et alii 1995) help, on the basis of life histories, to explore the problematic relations between transformations which affect private life and links to work, between "family" transitions and occupational transitions. They give high priority to the evaluation of situations by individuals and help to understand the way in which they see the context or the situation (Dubar/Gadea/Rolle 1996). Occupational transition is, therefore, relative when it comes to the more general problem of socialisation.

Although it focused on the French situation, the work undertaken by Demazière/Dubar et alii (1994) on the integration of young people with a low level of schooling does seem to reveal the progress made by biographical studies. It could help to elaborate a sort of analytical model for European comparisons which will begin with regional analysis. Based on 10 areas and some 1,000 people who left school in 1986 with the lowest school certificate in France, the research staff have put together a sample and undertaken the following research activities:

- re-establishment of objective paths, integration paths on the basis of calendar data,
- collection of life stories and subjective trajectories,
- determination of structural context in order to understand "localised integration systems".

This approach, which is similar to social analysis, involving a small area, has been supplemented with interviews with institutional players. It has helped to distinguish three sub-groups of characteristics: the contexts which are favourable for all young people including those with the lowest school level, the contexts which combine employment opportunities with the mobilisation of players and the uncertain and clearly disadvantageous contexts. If could be particularly enlightening if we apply these methodologies to other components in the transition to overall working life.

It is from amongst these approaches that we can certainly find those which are based most directly on the non-functional analysis of occupational transition. The epistemolcgical articulation between holism and individualism seems to have been neutralised to the benefit of a search for meaning which combines social and individual strata and contextual data. We also find there some explanations of mobility, qualification, the impact of resources which have to be compared with other levels of approach if we are going to identify the models for international comparison of occupational transition.

4.2.2 The occupations

The sociology of occupations has seen a renewal of its problems in the light of the common interest shown by economists and sociologists in the labour market (Dubar 1991). The focus of analysis has shifted from the content of work towards transition via integration because of the actual context of employment. Based on the theory of segmentation, we could think that the occupational model was based on the internal market in terms of socialisation with rather abstract apprenticeships: occupational socialisation would function as integration and its opposite as rejection on the external market.

Based on the only French reports with which we are familiar, we could put forward a strong hypothesis that the desire for occupational identity is also a desire for access to a form of job security. The occupations and their protected markets are at the heart of social links between them and their counterparts on the secondary market who are involved in the development of training in order to give more people access to occupations which are linked in terms of qualifications (Bertaux 1997). The occupational markets also organise transition and this aspect is closely linked to changes in the organisation of work in the production system, particularly in the tertiary sector.

4.2.3 Qualifications, skills, experience

These concepts could help to identify various currents in the field of European research between qualification as a social construct, the result of negotiations between players for the economists and sociologists, competence as a set of qualities attached above all to the individual which use subjectivity as the main element in relations, and experience which is more or less articulated between the two first ones, as the fruit of the occupational and social paths.

Qualifications are defined as the result of joint regulation leading to rules, the product of the internal labour market and a certain type of organisation of production, shaped by the system of occupational relations (Reynaud 1987, quoted by Dubar 1991). Together with competence and experience, it represents what individuals exchange on the labour market. Competence and experience are more attached to the individual and are part of the focus of biographical research described above.

International comparisons of qualifications, like all the subjects mentioned in this section, encounter difficulties of a conceptual nature. Furthermore, we have classifications which result from what is often a formal approach to the concept. We, therefore, endeavour "*to describe more vast sets of knowledge and know-how which are characteristic of the relations between individuals and their work*" (Bailly/Vigezzi 1993). These grids are rigid and outdated and are inherent in a national area which is not homogeneous in respect of the organisation of production. Finally, companies behave differently when it comes to status.

Hence, it is not easy to understand qualification on the European level if the goal is to grasp their role in the organisation of occupational transition. Consequently, it is essential to adopt an approach based on occupational branches in order to examine in greater depth their role in terms of mobility on the internal market. Several studies examine groups with a low level of qualification or in intermediate occupations. In our opinion, it is in this area that we need to extend European comparisons in order to identify changes in the links between the internal markets and the external market.

4.3 Institutions, work organisation and practices of the players

We suggest a level of analysis which, as far as we know, has not been addressed very much or perhaps so far has been assigned to expertise and management. In the research field it could provide results in terms of analysis and not of prescription. This would be all the more rewarding if we were to introduce a historical dimension. The organisation itself of transition brings in institutions which vary depending on the national situations. We have selected three groups who are responsible for structuring the labour market.

4.3.1.1 Public employment services

Normally, they are largely dependent on government institutions. All the same they have a special history shaped by the national environment for their activities between politics and production. The existing descriptions on the European level (European Observatory on Employment 1992) do not offer any analyses and it would be interesting on the basis of this national research (Charlier et alii, 1996) to undertake comparative analysis of public employment services on the European level. It would not be enough to view them on the national level of their activities. We should also examine their activities in a narrower context in which it would be easier to analyse their interaction with other players.

4.3.1.2 The "parallel" economy

Association structures and the parallel economy, supported or not by public authorities including bodies for training integration, are also involved in the organisation of transition. There are few international studies on these structures. On the European level, we should also examine the forms of self-employment and the role of the so-called informal economy in the organisation of transition. We understand how important it is to place them in a social framework and in the context of historical dynamics.

4.3.1.3 Private placement structures

There have been private placement structures for a long time for all categories of salaried workers. Temporary employment agencies have been the subject of studies (Belkacem 1997) which often highlight the special nature of the workforce which they generate. It would be useful to envisage their role in a division of labour with other placement bodies.

It would be interesting to study the overall history of these institutions, the work organisation which they develop and the practices of players on the local level. Furthermore, from a dynamic point of view, it would also be interesting to examine the division of labour between these bodies in order to understand not only how they function but also the special nature of each local or national context in respect of the position of these structures in the organisation of transition and changes to forms of employment.

4.4 Appeal for/rejection of the workforce by the production system

As already indicated in the first chapter of this section, changes in the production system lead globally to changes in the forms of recruitment and redundancy. Examination of these phenomena would help us to contextualise the organisation of occupational transition. Companies may also be considered as essential players in this organisation in respect of the recent changes in the appeal for/rejection of the workforce which has been viewed as one of the ways of regulating salaried employment.

4.4.1 Recruitment policies, scale effect of branches and sectors

Studies on the recruitment/redundancy policies of companies were few in number at least in France up to this decade during which they have increased considerably (Merle/Fournier 1987). The outsourcing of some functions, the transformations in some segments of the production sector, the general move towards deregulation of employment have all contributed to changing the behaviour of companies in respect of their appeal for/rejection of the workforce (IRES 1995, 1996 and international comparative studies of branches). In our opinion it would be useful to undertake a stocktaking of knowledge on the characteristics of existing international studies in order to identify the need, at least from the methodological point of view, to gain insight on the European level into the branch involvement in the development of analysis of the organisation of occupational transition.

4.4.2 Changes in the organisation of work and qualifications

The existing studies will certainly not be able to cover the very wide field of complex changes in the production system which sometimes move outside the European context bearing in mind the internationalisation of the economy. Nevertheless, as far as the issue of occupational transition is concerned, we believe it would be particularly interesting to begin by identifying restricted areas (regional level) which are comparable and also to advance hypotheses in terms of policies for workforce management which would give insight into the role of companies in the organisation of transition. This could involve addressing aspects which have to do with industrial relations, salaries, the organisation of work in respect of qualifications and mobility. The results would help to throw light on the links between "internal markets and external markets" in a limited area by establishing links between the socio-economic division of labour and the transition processes such as activity/inactivity, employment/unemployment in connection with overall life cycles from school to old age.

4.5 A transversal area: continuing training

For the last 20 years the role of training has been studied either as a contributory factor to the transformation or adjustment of qualifications or as a contributory factor to developing skills of a social nature[33]. Above all things, it has been viewed as a major component in socialisation (Dubar 1991) which regulates, both in its initial and continuing form, the development of salary and career, also balances the interests of the state, employers, employees and guarantees social reproduction. Continuing training policies are not studied from the strict angle of occupational transition. We do, however, believe that they could be examined in greater depth from this angle. We will take three subjects from recent work which all addressed international comparison in this area and can help to enrich our approach.

"The orientation role of continuing training" was the subject at a seminar which was held in Spain on 23 and 24 October 1996 (Dupont/Planas et alii 1996) concerning the prospects of the laying down of European policies. On an empirical level, the work at this seminar can be praised for having addressed from the very outset the question of the articulation between the internal markets and the external market within the framework of the restructuring of salaried employment and individual trajectories. This leaves a whole field of study open which could offer insight into international comparisons of training paths and their consequences in terms of the organisation of occupational transition in respect of an itinerary of employment and qualification which will initially cover some socio-occupational categories since the subject of the general work aimed to "avoid the exclusion of workers involved in a process of mobility".

The role of the facilitator of external mobility in continuing training (Auer 1996) led to work on classifying European countries in line with the links between the players concerned. On the basis of Eurostat data which has not yet been completed but which aims to achieve an exhaustive comparison, the Danish system has been shown to be the most suited to adapting workers to structural change. The studies mentioned adopt a clearly institutionalist stance without, however, resituating the comparison in a social framework. In this way, they can come to conclusions about efficiency.

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[33] This is the case in France for some schemes which were first designed for young people and which were then extended to adults, in particular the long-term unemployed.

The problems of European comparison in this field have been raised by focusing first on social promotion (Dubar/Gadea/Rolle 1996). In an attempt to "*escape from reductions of the culture perspective or the abstractions which sometimes characterise the economic view*", the authors address the issue of comparisons by means of the problems which they raise. They conclude that there is a need to take into account "*both the macro-social structural dynamics and the subjective experiences of internalisation and reinterpretation of these dynamics*". This stresses the need to understand the "*new education-work trajectories*" in their individual or common forms.

The training on offer has an effect on the transformation of qualifications (Béduwé/Espinasse 1997) and may explain the changes which occupations have undergone. "*Public education/training policies are influenced by various pressure groups defending their interests, which it is often in the interest of the public authorities to satisfy*"[34]. As a result of consensus between various players, continuing training may lead to changes in the structure of skills in each occupation. The theoretical hypothesis in this comparison of five European countries is based on the idea of the equivalence between the level of certification and the level of experience; this is what they call explicit and implicit training. Here are the results:

- *"preferential deployment of certain certificates in certain occupations even outside regulated occupations, each occupation thus being clustered around one or several certification levels;*
- *each generation has a specific level of certification of its own;*
- *the diversity of certification levels within the same occupation and the manner in which it varies according to the age of individuals: plurality of access to that occupation".*

Furthermore, numerous studies identify company policies in the field of continuing training and a training infrastructure which combines both public and private structures (Béduwé/Espinasse 1997; CÉREQ 1996). The role of public authorities in the organisation of transition by means of continuing training must be understood as articulation between the production of rules applicable to companies, the financing of specific measures and the special role of public training bodies.

Some reflections on the social perspectives in conjunction with the analysis of the organisation of occupational transition:

We can see to what extent *the level of decentralisation or centralisation in each country is an important dimension in order to identify the right level for examining these problems.* If economics are overly dominant, sociology and the educational sciences are not far behind. Economics begins and ends with hypotheses about the production context whereas the two other disciplines traditionally tend to begin more readily with individuals in order to reach conclusions about groups and identify the challenges for society. The public authorities (the state or other relevant levels) seek to regulate the appeal for/rejection of the workforce by companies in line with political considerations. The effects in terms of social construction are felt particularly in the categorisation of groups. Empirical research in this field, however, focuses more readily on the mechanisms of the permanent rejection of specific groups on the labour market. Against this backdrop, these different studies have still to be linked to historic and statistical data about developments in the volume of employment and its forms in the countries concerned without forgetting the salary dimension.

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[34] "Youth transitions in Europe: theories and evidence", 1997, p.207-237

In order to make progress on the "new approaches in economic bases for evaluation", which is a political problem, we certainly have to re-examine the concept "of the organisation of occupational transition" and, more particularly, the "occupational" aspect of the problem. This may be deemed to be overly restricted since it replaces the centrality of employment with that of work or is most frequently understood as being this. In the same way, the research work is dominant which starts with the need by companies for labour and then study the composition of the reserve army and its developments whereas in fact more attention could be paid to work which begins with the employment needs of various groups. In the research world don't the sponsors, the financing channels and the occupational systems and markets generate guidance and do they not close the door to opportunities for more fundamental research? Evaluation generates prescription which is too close to analysis in order to allow analysis of its desired independence. One path might take us towards more distanced approaches which, by means of empirical studies, will push social analysis towards a greater degree of complementary between synchrony and diachrony but also between the global level (national and super-national states) and the local level (territorial and individual).

Finally, the centrality of work as the structuring element in identity-building processes for individuals generates two strong ideas: if, throughout people's lives, work activity in the form of employment occupies a position which is reduced with the extension of schooling and life expectations, it still retains its importance as an essential source of resources. From this point of view, salaried employment as the dominant form of employment in Europe is the backdrop to the analysis of the organisation of "occupational" transition. Here, too, paid unemployment, retraining, temporary work and some forms of part-time work or successive insecure jobs over longer periods could be considered either as transitions between the internal market and the external market or as symptoms of a process of social dualisation provoked by the economy. In our opinion, these aspects of transition should be taken into consideration in the comparative approaches henceforth since "*international comparisons only have a restricted degree of validity when they examine the specific elements which have been recognised and isolated instead of looking at sub-systems, relations between sub-systems, structures, forms of existence and the activities of social and institutional players*" (Lhotel/Romain 1996).

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OBJECTIVES, REALISATION AND ORGANISATION OF CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING (CVT)

1.1 Social Change: Developing and modernising the socio-economic structures

European societies are in the process of changing their socio-economic structures. They all have – at least – reached a status of development which was defined in the late sixties as the ‚New Industrial State‘ (see Galbraith 1968). The patterns of development of the industrialised society since the last century may be summed up as follows (see Toffler 1980):

- predominance of the second sector;
- separation of workplace and home;
- breakthrough of full-time gainful employment (mainly male workers);
- establishment of independent systems of social security;
- creation of an administrative machinery and rise of bureaucracy;
- creation of functional differentiated sub-systems managing the needs of the industrialised societies (e.g. education systems which became more and more independent from traditional social or familiar forms of education);
- growing process of (functional) social differentiation and specialisation (e.g. of social roles, vocations, organisations);
- growing process of standardisation (e.g. of prices, products, employment contracts);
- growing process of institutionalisation (e.g. of vocations, pressure-groups etc.).

Related to the role and position of the sub-system ‚education system‘ in industrialised societies this process of industrialisation led to a strong predominance of the economic system which defines the tasks of most of the other sub-systems: The education system within the ‚new industrial society‘ had to produce knowledge, skills and vocational qualifications in order to fulfil the economic tasks of the predominant economic system (see Hradil 1994, p. 55).

One effect of this predominance of the economic system is the centrality of the occupational status for the social and economic existence of the human beings. The ‚job‘ or the ‚occupation‘ defines to a very high degree the social and economic position and also the chances of individuals within the social stratification of industrialised societies. In his historical analysis about „Education and Society in Modern Europe“, Ringer distinguishes three phases of industrialisation (early industrial phase up to 1806, a high industrialised phase which ended 1930 and a late industrial phase). Concerning the relationship between the development of education and the economy during the process of industrialisation, Ringer states that the main tendencies within European education during the first phase „had practically nothing to do with business“ (Ringer 1979, p. 2), that education during the second phase produced „new educational institutions and curricular options ... as ‚modern‘ alternatives to the traditional forms of secondary and higher education“ (especially by stressing „technical and other applied studies“ (Ringer 1979, p. 3); and that as a long-term consequence of the take-off of the third phase „these changes would seem to signal the convergence of education and the economy, an adjustment of educational systems to the manpower requirements of the late industrial era“ (Ringer 1979, p. 4).

Although the so-called ‚technical function model of educational development‘ (see Collins, R. 1971) is not able to explain the national differences in the historical development of the education systems, it may help in our context to quote Landes, who distinguished four different levels of training in order to find out how education can contribute to economic development:

- „reading, writing, and arithmetic, the rudiments imparted by primary schools;
- the vocational skills of the craftsman and mechanic, presumably obtainable either through apprenticeship or from intermediate vocational schools;

- the engineer's combination of scientific principle and applied training, which might be taught at the institutions of higher technical education;
- advanced scientific knowledge, both theoretical and applied." (Landes 1970, p. 340).

But is has to be stressed, that this more or less close relationship did not spread until the last phase of industrialisation, as Ringer resumes: „In short, a clear and direct relationship between higher education and the economy probably did not emerge until the main industrial phase in the history of European education, when certain forms of scientific and technical instruction became at least contributory factors to further economic growth" (Ringer 1979, p. 5). In short, we can state that at least within the context of this last phase of industrialisation the measures taken in the fields of education – and especially in vocational education and continuing vocational education – have become more and more important for the economic systems and for individuals as well.

During the last two decades, many social scientists have stated the end of this classical „industrial society". Some central indicators, for example the growing third sector and the diminishing second sector all over the European nations, support this radical thesis. We think that a structural analysis of social processes has to be more cautious. We refer to the changes in European societies by calling them „advanced industrial societies" (see also Hradil 1994, p. 56 f). The most important trends of change from an industrial society to an ‚advanced industrial society' are:

- Destandardisation and pluralisation of social institutions (e.g. family, decline of full-time gainful employment);
- decline of the second sector and growth of the third sector all over Europe;
- materialistic concepts increasingly become supplements of so-called ‚post-materialistic' aspects; concerning the processes of education and learning (VET and CVT included) aims such as self-realisation consequently become more and more important and supplement the above-mentioned economic functions of education (even concerning the vocational and continuing vocational education). This leads to a
- growing process of individualisation and decentralisation;
- the process cf expansion of the welfare state which is also connected with the
- expansion of the education systems.

Related to the subject of education, the advanced industrial society has changed from a paradigm which is based on industrial production to a new paradigm, which is primarily based on knowledge and science. Advanced industrial societies in that specific sense are – as the OECD (see above) and also the European Commission formulated in its „White Paper" (1996) on knowledge-based „learning societies". The central (and growing) significance of education and especially of VET and CVT is defined and triggered by this central trend towards social change in all European societies. Concerning the fields of education, VET and CVT within the European context and the problems of comparison, the central thesis of the authors may be formulated as follows:

All over Europe the educational systems and – as a part of them – the VET and CVT-systems as well – are a more or less integrated part of their surrounding social structures. Viewed from the macro-level, these social structures are structurally similar because at the end of the 20th century all European Member States are on the way to the so-called ‚advanced industrial society' (see above). Some of them already have reached this status quo, and some of them are still at the status of an ‚industrialised society": All European societies are involved in a process of modernisation and Hradil describes this in the following way: „It is possible to observe more frequently advances or a lagging behind in terms of modernisation than specific national approaches" (Hradil 1994, p. 57).

One important ubiquitous tendency which proves this theory is the trend all over Europe for the expansion of the third sector (see table 1), which will perhaps be replaced by a type of society, which is dominated by knowledge.

Table 1:

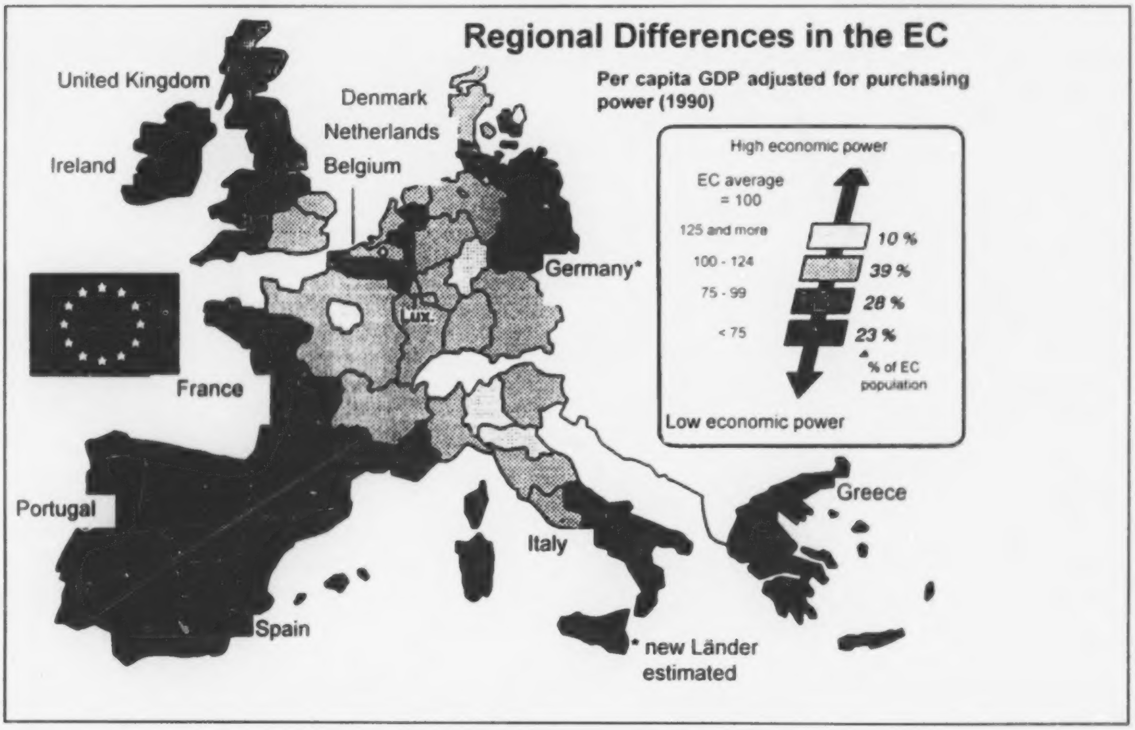
Employees in sectors of the economy 1992

Country	**1st sector**	**2nd sector**	**3rd sector**	*Country*	**1st sector**	**2nd sector**	**3rd sector**
B	3	28	69	*NL*	5	26	70
DEN	6	27	67	*P*	18	35	48
F	6	30	65	*S*	12	33	55
G	4	41	56	*A*	8	37	55
GR	27	27	46	*FIN*	8	31	61
UK	2	29	69	*NOR*	6	24	69
IRL	15	28	57	*SW*	3	29	68
I	9	32	59	*EU*	7	33	60

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt: Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Ausland. Wiesbaden 1993 and: Schäfers 1995, p. 309

When a nation is lagging behind in terms of modernisation, this means it has an economy which is less strong than the economies of the so-called ‚advanced industrial societies‘. In general, this means for the European Member States, that the periphery of Europe is characterised more by structures of a typical ‚industrial society‘ than the central Member States are: Such Member States with a more ground to make up in terms of modernisation are Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal, whereas nations with a higher degree of social and economic development find themselves in Central Europe (see Stein Rokkan 1987). However this rule of thumb is inprecise because of the strong differences in regional development for example in the eastern part of Germany, in the south-western part of Spain and in the south of Italy. They are related to economic power – some regions in northern Italy are as strong as the most developed regions in Europe, whereas the southern part of Italy is one of the European regions with the highest backwardness (see figure 1). The authors will address these special aspects of regional disparities and the social and economic heterogeneity between the European Member States in Chapter 3. They will also in this context draw some conclusions concerning the consequences for educational and CVT policy.

Figure 1:


Regional Differences in the EC
Per capita GDP adjusted for purchasing power (1990)
High economic power
EC average = 100
125 and more
10 %
100 - 124
39 %
75 - 99
28 %
< 75
23 %
% of EC population
Low economic power
United Kingdom
Ireland
Denmark
Netherlands
Belgium
Germany*
Lux.
France
Portugal
Spain
Italy
Greece
* new Länder estimated

Source: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung1996, p. 63

1.1.1 Towards the ‚knowledge-based society': Increasing importance of education, VET and CVT as well

Despite these differences in social and economic welfare between the European Member States, there is clearly a trend everywhere to the enlargement of the education systems. But whereas this increasing tendency was very strong during the sixties and the early seventies, this high degree of increase has slackened in the eighties and nineties. But all the same, as table 2 illustrates, the increasing tendency has continued up to now.

At the same time, these OECD data prove besides the general growth of education systems two further structural developments: first: the distribution of the population among the different ISCED levels is not the same in all Member States. Less developed Member States such as Portugal (86 % in 1991), Spain (77 % in 1992) and Greece (76 % in 1981), Italy (72 % in 1992) and Ireland (58 % in 1992) had a high or even a very high rate of its population in the ISCED levels 0, 1 and 2. Of course, these countries do have at the same time rather low rates of population within the higher ISCED levels 3 to 7. Vice versa, the more developed nations all rates of less than 50% for this lowest of the ISCED levels.

Table 2:

Population aged 25-64 that has attained a specific and highest education level 1981-92

		ISCED - Level (Men and Women)			
		0/1/2	**3**	**5**	**6/7**
Austria	1989	35	60	--	5
	1992	32	61	--	7
Belgium	1989	63	20	10	7
	1992	55	25	11	9
Denmark	1981	50	36	4	11
	1988	43	40	7	11
	1992	41	40	6	13
Finland	1982	55	31	7	8
	1989	42	40	8	10
	1992	38	43	8	10
France	1981	61	29	3	7
	1989	52	34	7	7
	1992	48	36	6	10
Germany	1989	22	61	7	10
	1992	18	61	10	12
Greece	1981	76	16	2	6
Ireland	1989	62	23	7	7
	1992	58	25	9	8
Italy	1989	74	20	--	6
	1992	72	22	--	6
Netherlands	1990	45	36	13	6
	1992	42	37	--	21
Portugal	1989	92	2	2	4
	1991	86	8	2	5
Spain	1981	90	5	--	6
	1989	80	10	--	9
	1992	77	10	3	10
Sweden	1981	51	33	6	10
	1992	30	45	13	13
United Kingdom	1984	46	40	6	8
	1989	37	48	7	9
	1992	32	50	8	11

Source: OECD (Lifelong Learning)1996, p. 280

The second tendency: without exception there is a tendency towards the upgrading of the level of formal qualifications in all Member States. Whereas the population rate in the lowest ISCED levels is declining (in the less developed countries less rapidly than in the more developed ones), this rate is increasing in the higher ISCED levels. The level of formal qualifications is, in other words, increasing all over Europe but the speed of its growth is as different as its starting point.

This growing importance of education is also reflected in the development of the field of CVT, which has increased all over Europe both in terms of the money spent on it and the degree of participation. And especially those Member States, which are situated on the periphery of Europe, have made enormous efforts during the last decade to increase their economic strength as Brandsma et al. (1995, p. 32) describe in the following manner:

> It can be said „with a certain degree of certainty that expenditure on continuing training during the last decade has steadily increased. The following examples illustrate this. In Belgium (Flemish community) the continuing training costs borne by the employment body VDAB have risen since by 60% since 1987. In Portugal continuing training costs have increased twofold between 1989 and 1990. In Greece the estimated continuing training expenditure increased fourfold between 1988 and 1990. In other countries, too, there was a considerable increase in expenditure on continuing training both by companies and by governments and other public bodies".

Nevertheless the fact that Member States such as Portugal (200% more expenditure in CVT within two years) and Greece (400% more expenditure within three years) have spent much more than the more modernised Member States, mainly indicates their low starting level in terms of the status quo of CVT and not in general a higher quantitative and qualitative level of CVT (in respect of the invested resources and the degree of participation as well).

To put it in a nutshell, although the different CVT systems all over Europe are very heterogeneous (even concerning their structural aspects; see the following chapters), there are – so to speak on the way to the common aim of an ‚advanced industrial society' – lots of common challenges (of a political, social and economic nature), which lead in all Member States to similar (or at least comparable) economical and political strategies. One of these central common issues is the belief that education and – especially concerning the world of work and economy – VET and CVT are among the most appropriate strategies to cope with these European and even global challenges.

This belief focuses on an explicit analytical perspective of the social, political and economic changes in Europe: The most important factor of change – not only in Europe, but world wide – is the tendency of modern advanced societies to be (or to become more and more) so-called „knowledge-based" or „information societies":

> „At long last, there appears to be a general consensus that societies are on the eve of a major breakthrough in the widespread use and application of new Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) throughout their economies. While different terminology is used in each country, (electronic highways in the United States, information society in Europe), all the indicators point to a rapid increase in the knowledge base of the economy, closely associated with (electronic) networking". (Soete 1996, p. 383)

This keyword of the ‚knowledge-based society' sums up the different processes of change which lead to the structure of the so-called ‚advanced industrial societies'. It also gives this type of social structure an explicit theoretical base and direction. Historically speaking, human competencies or the intangible capital have always been at the core of economic development in any society. The existence of layers of specialists who make important contributions to the production of economically useful knowledge was already one of the central ideas of Adam Smith.

And also the neo-Schumpeterian scholars like Galbraith interpreted innovation as an outcome of organised research. In connection with this aspect of the relationship between the policy of education and economic growth, this idea was – after the Soviet-Sputnik success – in the early sixties the central model in the policy of education, VET and CVT in most OECD Member States although it did have a rather weak theoretical foundation (cf. Becker 1970; Schultz 1994, Psacharopoulos 1987 and Woodhall 1994).

But the new dimension or the new paradigm is the perspective of a „knowledge-based economy“ (or a learning economy or a information society) where the economy is more strongly and more directly rooted in the production, distribution and use of knowledge than ever before". (Foray/Lundvall 1996, p. 12). The empirical evidence illustrates the growing importance of knowledge. As recent OECD analyses prove, today the relative proportions of physical and intangible investment have changed considerably. Riel Miller stated in OECD research that „total industrial intangible investment had overtaken physical investment in Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom by 1987" (Miller, 1996, p. 69). Miller concludes „that knowledge is the most fundamental resource in our contemporary economy“ (Miller 1996, p. 69).

This conclusion has strong implications for the structures of advanced societies and for individuals as well. It describes (and partially explains), for example, the predominant problems of the labour market like growing unemployment on the European labour markets: unemployment in Europe is mostly a problem for those individuals who do not have the necessary qualifications or the necessary knowledge demanded by the labour market. Very often, those individuals are not able to cope with the challenges of the New Technologies or, more generally, with the consequences of a knowledge-based society.

Unemployment in Europe, which has reached 9.5% on average in Europe (see Eurostat 1993, p. 152), very often means the unemployment of unskilled people, people who are younger than 25 years (in Europe 1992: 32.9 %), women (49.5 %; see Eurostat 1993, p. 150 ff.) and – in general – disadvantaged groups on the labour markets. With regard to these people (in 1996 nearly 19,000,000 people all over Europe) we should also reflect on the distributional aspects of technological change and on the unintended consequences of the dawning of the ‚information society‘:

> „New technologies and the new international trade patterns increase the potential for economic growth and productivity gains. At the same time they pose a major challenge to the adjustment abilities of the OECD countries. ... In a climate of high unemployment, many people – rightly or wrongly – believe, that technological progress and globalisation are associated with a threat to their social position and not with a wider sense of opportunities“ (Opening remarks of the Danish Prime Minister, quoted by: Soete 1996, p. 383).

The central point is that the structural change from a traditional ‚industrial society‘ to a ‚knowledge-based society‘ is making sweeping changes to the demands of the labour markets. It causes severe mismatches by excluding those participants from the labour markets who do not possess the qualifications which are necessary to cope with the challenges of the New Technologies. Even those individuals who do not suffer from unemployment are directly involved in this process of change „Individuals first confronted with computers and firms using automation technologies, as well as network and systemic information technologies, must forget how to do things the old way, learn new habits, and put into place completely new forms of organisation“ (Foray/Lundvall 1996, p.14).

All these consequences of the ICT revolution, which lead in the long term to the ‚knowledge-based society‘ (change of structure and organisation of work, qualifications required on the labour markets, the acceleration of innovation in terms of product and process development and so on) „requires an acceleration and amplification of the learning process at many levels of society, involving firms, training and education systems and formal institutions“ (Foray/Lundvall 1996, p. 14). This process hits all European Member States in the sense of a challenge (not exclusively, but also) of the systems of general education, of VET and CVT. The ICT revolution is a global one, and therefore it goes beyond the frontiers of the European Community. As a common challenge this global process requires common answers all over Europe.

The above-mentioned necessary acceleration of the learning processes especially with regard to the labour markets points directly to the central function of CVT. European economies need highly qualified and skilled workers but they also have to adapt to the changing demands of the accelerated economies. The way to flexibilisation (and decentralisation) of vocational learning after vocational training leads to CVT, which is from this point of view a very flexible instrument of adaptation to the changing demands of the labour markets and of the employment systems as well.

This perception is not a new one but it turns into a new dimension within the context of the dawning of the knowledge-based society. Conceptualisations as lifelong learning (see UNESCO 1976), of „recurrent education“ (see OECD 1973 and 1978) and – especially related to the European context – of ‚alternance‘ (see European Commission 1979; CEDEFOP 1982 and 1984) presuppose the necessity of vocational, labour-market related learning during the whole life of individuals. And this assumption has nowadays become more important than ever. Therefore, the European Commission has stressed the importance of vocational learning and – referring to the aspect of lifelong learning and especially to the fact that CVT is more closely connected to the special demands of the labour markets – also of CVT. In its so-called „Memorandum on Community Vocational Training Policy for the 1990s“ the European Commission states:

> „The acquisition, maintenance, extension and intensification of occupational qualifications depend on the vocational training systems in which training and activity are closely linked to one another. The occupational learning process should extend throughout an individual's working life. Vocational training policies must impart a whole range of know-how and skills which can be used in the long term and pave the way to the necessary technical qualifications but also to opportunities for future development... Hence, modern vocational training must be organised in such a way that knowledge in the methodological and social areas and the ability to learn in an independent and ongoing manner are an integral part of occupational qualifications and the foundation for later continuing training and the learning process in a work situation.“ (European Commission/Memorandum 1991, p. 10)

Given that in *this context* the *function* of CVT (namely as a lifelong learning and training concept which is characterised by its close connection to the world of labour and work) is the most central aspect, it does not matter (at the moment) how CVT and its institutional structure are organised in the different European Member States. What are important are the *contents* of CVT (e.g. New Technologies, development of broadly based skills), the addressees of CVT (e.g. the unemployed but also employed and qualified people) and the enterprises who need trained workers and who demand, offer and normally pay for CVT programmes.

This ‚triangle‘ of (1) contents of VET and especially CVT, of (2) addressees (individuals who join and benefit from CVT measures by offering their acquired qualifications on the labour markets) and (3) enterprises (who produce and benefit from CVT) shows the strong interdependency between the measures taken within the field of CVT, the employment system and its changing organisation of work, the labour market (which demands a high degree of flexible qualifications) and – in the end – the economic growth and competitiveness of an economy.

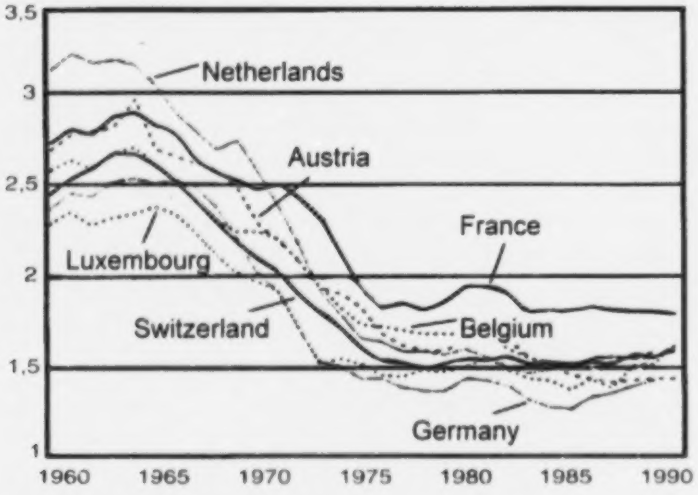
1.1.2 Facing the challenge of the ageing process in European societies with CVT?

From this point of view, CVT is a structural and decisive factor for the development of the European economies towards a ‚knowledge-based‘ „advanced industrial society“. On the one hand, CVT is even able to mitigate crucial effects which are situated outside the employment system. In the long term, the ageing of all European societies has serious consequences for the structure of qualifications on the labour markets.

The average growth of the European population (as a result of birth rate, deaths and migration effects) between 1950 and 1991 was about 26 % (see Hradil 1995, p. 291). The growth of the population for example in Japan (40 %) and USA (50 %) and also world wide (110 %) was much higher and since the end of the so-called ‚baby-boom‘ in the sixties there has been a major decline in birth rates all over Europe (see 2).

Figure 2:

Development of the relative birth rate in Europe 1960-1990

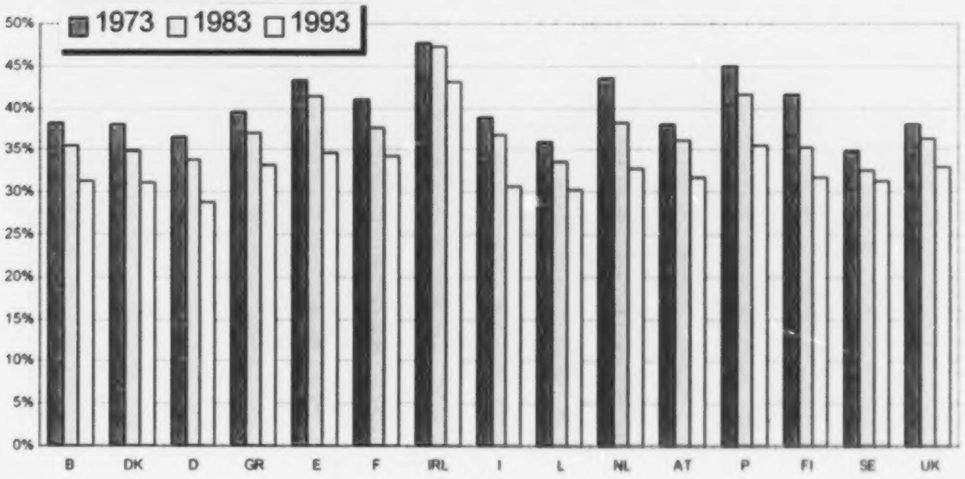


Source: Council of Europe 1994, p. 39

In 1990 there was only one single country (Ireland) which reached a birth rate that made the stability of the population possible (this rate is an average 2.1 children per women between 15 and 45 years (see Hradil 1995, p. 288 f.). For the European employment systems and especially for the labour markets the dwindling size of up-and-coming generations constitutes a serious threat because in future there will be a shortage of young qualified people.

Figure 3:

Percentage of under-25-year-olds, 1973, 1983 and 1993



Source: Study Group education and training 1996, p. 3
Germany and **Portugal**: The percentage for 1973 is an estimate.
Germany: The percentage for 1993 includes the new *Länder*.

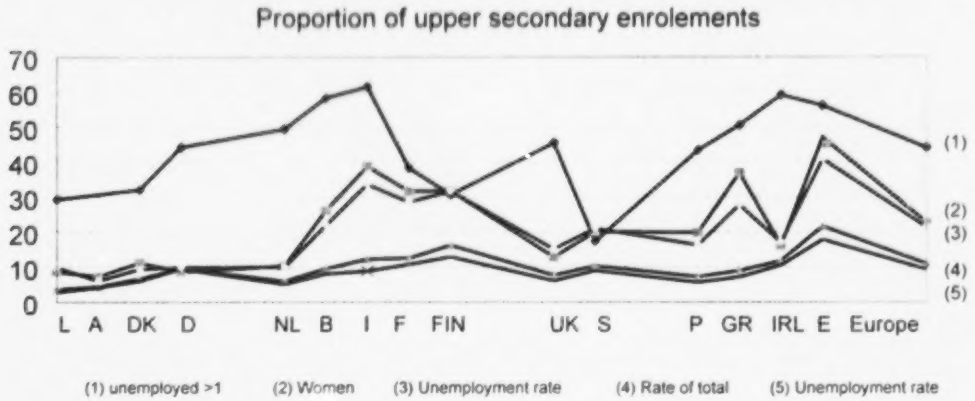
The effects of this ageing process on European societies are already obvious today. As figure 3 illustrates, we find in all Member States a strong decline in the number of young people under 25. In future, there are grounds for hoping that this trend will be stopped or even reversed within the next two decades. Consequently, all European Member States have to move towards a strategy of qualifying the available older people who are already integrated into the work process. And the only way to follow this strategy is to strengthen the education programmes on all levels and especially on the level of CVT. Exactly this strategy is reflected by the above-mentioned ubiquitous and growing efforts in the field of CVT (concerning access to CVT, investments in CVT and the absolute growth of schemes in the field of CVT as well; for a more detailed analysis see Chapter 3).

1.1.3 Coping with the challenge of unemployment with CVT?

The ubiquitous existence of a very high level of unemployment (nearly 19 million people in the different European Member States) is probably one of the most serious problems we face in Europe. And in terms of short-time development, there is less hope that this dangerous trend towards an increasing number of employees becoming unemployed could be stopped or even reversed. The fight by European societies against unemployment by means of their respective political efforts has been one of the most important motivations for European policies on VET and CVT since the late seventies.

Figure 4:

Age and sex dependent unemployment by school system type (1997)



datas from: Eurostat News Release Nr. 35/97;

Figure 4 illustrates that all Member States have to deal with major unemployment problems. Although the percentage rate of unemployment is a serious problem in all Member States, it is more serious in some (e.g. Spain, Finland) than in other Member States (Luxembourg, Netherlands etc.) In addition to this, the main problem of unemployment concerns the disadvantaged groups on the labour market. They include the long-term unemployed, unemployed females under 25 and the unemployed of both sexes who are under 25.

Two trends are obvious: the first one is a focal problem of nearly all Member States, namely the extremely high rate of long-term unemployment (except Sweden). And the second problem concerns the transition phase to the labour market: Whereas some Member States do not have strong differences between the average rate of unemployment and youth unemployment (Germany, Denmark, Austria, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, UK and Ireland), the other Member States (especially Spain, Greece and Portugal, but also Italy, France and Finland) have very strong differences concerning the average unemployment and youth unemployment.

One explanation is surely the different degree of economic power of the Member States. It is obvious that the less developed countries like Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy have more difficulties than the more highly developed ones. But another reason could be – and this will be analysed in Chapter 2 – that there is a different degree of efficiency concerning the absorption of young people by the labour market. This is possibly (and amongst other reasons) caused by the different types of school systems on the secondary level (apprenticeship system, more than 50 % of students in vocational schools, on-the-job training and finally systems with more than 50 % of students in the field of general education).

But nevertheless we must state in this context that nearly twenty years of a fight against unemployment did not have any effect (see Lipsmeier/Münk 1994, p. 46 f.). The central aim of CVT is (and has always been) at first to adapt the structure of the available qualifications to the actual needs of the labour markets (both to adapt qualifications of employed people to actual qualification requirements and to support the first phase of the emergence of new occupations; see Lipsmeier 1987, p. 81).

But in view of the increasing unemployment in nearly all European Member-States, CVT in many cases has become an instrument for the temporary employment of individuals who are unemployed. Early empirical research concerning the Member States Belgium, France and Italy gives evidence of the fact that CVT „scarcely plays any role in the struggle to prevent unemployment“ unless the unemployed individuals „take things into their own hands and attend evening classes, distance learning courses or teach themselves“ (Berton 1983, p. 11).

The increasing number of unemployed people on the European labour markets has led to a strategy which nearly all European governments have followed, but which was (and is still today) nevertheless without any success:

> „Against this backdrop adult vocational training is alienated from its original goal of occupational advancement and new qualifications in line with the needs of the production system. The training schemes of the state aim to maintain jobs, the employment of the unemployed and the safeguarding of social peace but not to prevent unemployment from emerging in the first place.“ (Berton 1983, p. 14)

Nevertheless, during the last decade several European governments have pursued a labour-market policy which has put very strong emphasis on this strategy to combat unemployment by providing financial support for CVT measures. For example in Germany this trend has become strong to such an extent, „that the constraints of the employment system have led to a move away from a purely preventive employment policy to a policy which tackles the underlying causes.“ (Münk/Lipsmeier 1997, p. 111)

The missing relationship between the increasing rate of investment and participation in CVT measures and the ever increasing rate of unemployment all over Europe illustrates painfully that our criticism outlined above is (unfortunately) right. However, we should not forget that – from the point of view of gainfully employed individuals – CVT is now more than ever an appropriate instrument to give employed people the chance to stay employed given the pace of technological development.

Therefore, a major focus on CVT does not directly lead to a lower degree of unemployment but it does influence the situation on the labour markets because it guarantees a high level structure of vocational qualifications. And the broad-based access to CVT measures for working people – at least from their point of view – does reduce the risk of becoming unemployed. This is not only an economic argument. It also has enormous social meaning.

1.1.4 Chances and problems of CVT in SMEs

Thinking about socio-economic structures and the impact on CVT, we should not forget that the European economy has a structure which is characterised by an overwhelming domination of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises). Therefore the SMEs have to be a focal point of interest when analysing European strategies for CVT and the impact of CVT. According to a definition of the European Commission SMEs are enterprises which employ up to 249 employees (see Eurostat, 1996, p. 26). As 3 illustrates, these SMEs are the most important factor on the European labour markets.

In comparison to the total employment quota, the SMEs employ at least 57.7 % of all employees within the European economy. In most of the southern Member States, which have an economic structure characterised by a very large proportion of enterprises with less than ten employees (or even with only one employee), this rate is as high as 85 % (Greece), 81 %

(Spain), 78 % (Italy) and 77,5 % (Portugal). The lowest percentage degree of SMEs are to be found in the UK with only 57.7 % and Belgium with 56.2 %.

Table 3:

Enterprises in the Europe of the 15 – distribution within the Member States

	Number of enterprises (1,000)	Number of employees (1,000,000)	Sales (Billion ECU)	SME quota in relation to the total employment quota (%)
EUR 15	15,777	101.02	11,636.20	66.2
Austria	188	2.16	232.90	68.0
Belgium	396	2.95	377.58	56.2
Denmark	163	1.41	172.96	72.5
Finland	199	1.15	137.19	56.6
France	1,956	14.40	1,753.88	63.4
Germany	2,420	24.13	2,865.19	59.9
Greece	1,038	1.95	--	85.6
Ireland	81	0.54	--	79.3
Italy	3,243	13.49	1,695.45	78.7
Luxembourg	14	0.16	20.46	71.0
Netherlands	395	4.27	475.01	60.9
Portugal	626	2.95	151.38	77.5
Spain	2,166	10.37	--	81.1
Sweden	341	2,24	368.25	65.2
United Kingdom	2,549	18.85	2,189.59	57.7

Source: Eurostat [Enterprises in Europe] 1996, p. 26

In addition to this, the European enterprises with less than 250 employees make up 99 % of all European enterprises. Throughout Europe, there are 15,777 enterprises with 11,636 billion total turnover and a workforce of some 101,200,000 employees (non-rural branches of trade: total amount: 145,000,000). 66.2% of these 101,200,000 employees work in SMEs and only 34,200,000 employees work in enterprises with more than 250 employees. (Eurostat [Enterprises in Europe] 1996, p. 26 f.; see also table 3 and 4. And finally, the SMEs also make a contribution to the total amount of turnover of about 65 % (table 4).

Table 4:

Distribution of employees and of turnover, SMEs and big enterprises

		Number of employees					
EUR 15 – 1992		0	1-9	10-49	50-249	250 +	Total
Number of Enterprises	(thousands)	7,846	6,783	971	146	31	15,777
Total amount of employees	(millions)	9.4	23.4	19.0	15.1	34.2	101.1
Total amount of turnover	(ECU billion)	835	2,131	2,368	2,231	4,071	11,636

Source: Eurostat [Enterprises in Europe] 1996, p. 27

In addition to these impressive quantitative aspects, the authors especially want to stress the qualitative aspects of SMEs concerning their importance for the European economy. Although there are great differences (e.g. in respect of sectoral distribution, the relationship between small and medium-sized enterprises in a country)[1], at least six main characteristics can be identified for the SMEs in all European Member States:

- SMEs are probably the most important ‚job-creators‘ in Europe (see Kotthoff/Reindl 1990). Although this is not a theory based on a broad scientific consensus, it is sure that
- SMEs are ‚the secret giants of the European Economy‘. SMEs are the most important employers (as table 3illustrates, about 66.2% of the employees are occupied in SMEs. Concerning the situation in each Member State, there is a variation of between 56.6% (SF) and 85.6 (GR);
- SMEs mostly operate regionally, and in the context of the European discussion about VET and CVT policy, the regional aspect is a very central aspect (‚Europe of regions‘);
- this importance of SMEs for the economic development of regions causes synergetic effects because of the accompanying circumstances in that they very often produce formal and informal networks (so-called ‚industrial districts‘, ‚regional agglomerations‘ or ‚regional clusters‘, see Hurtienne/Messner), which enhance economic competitive capacity (see Porter 1990);
- among other things, SMEs, because of this tendency to create networks, have a very high degree of innovative power: depending on the sector and the Member State, SMEs have introduced and implemented between 20% and 70% of technological innovations. In this context R&D is a central aspect of the economic activities of SMEs (see Eurostat [Enterprises in Europe] 1996, p. 67);
- the decline of the Taylorist era, the appearance of new technologies, new concepts of production and the changing organisation of work demand a higher degree of flexibilisation and decentralisation, less bureaucratisation, bottom-up decision-making structures and a stronger orientation towards the strategy of learning at work. Whereas ‚big industries‘ have to change their structures radically (e.g. by outsourcing, by lean management), SMEs always have had structures of this kind. For them, it is much easier to adapt to the challenges of a wholly modernised world of labour and work and their employees are used to work and to obtaining and improving their vocational qualifications in a very close connection to the work process. Compared with the conditions in the ‚Big Industries‘ this constitutes a structural advantage (see Georg 1995 and Kotthoff/Reindl 1990). The arguments of the European Commission are very similar in this context.[2]

In general, it can be concluded that for the above-mentioned reasons SMEs are the backbone of economic development in all Member States. Thanks to the learning processes in SMEs, they generally have some structural advantages compared with ‚Big Industry‘. On the other hand, there are in view of the changing societies and the New Technologies also major disadvantages, as an OECD report for instance underlines:

> „Today small firms are in a paradoxical situation. Technological developments have rarely seemed to be so favourable to small size production, yet small firms remain highly vulnerable and are often in obvious need of assistance." ... Especially „the range and variety of intangible investments which the small industrial firms must be capable of financing are the same as those of larger firms. However the financial and human resources of the small firms are often too small to do this or to establish on its own a range of external sourcing relationships." (OECD 1992, p. 107)

As a consequence, the OECD states, that in most countries, after a spate of measures and programs to help SMEs, governments are increasingly concerned with the development of success strategies by the SMEs, and are seeking to define policies based on market-efficiency criteria". Because of that, a number of institutions and programs have been set up to facilitate the transfer of technological information and maintain the SMEs competitiveness" (OECD 1992, p. 109).

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[1] For example in Spain, Portugal and Greece the majority of SMEs are one man enterprises, whereas in central Europe countries like Netherlands, Germany, Luxemburg and Austria have a stronger focus on medium enterprises (see Eurostat 1996, p. 39).

[2] „Mass production is declining and making room for a more customized type of production. The traditional pattern of growth in paid employment, i.e. full time and permanent, appears to be on the decline. Production relationships and conditions of employment are changing. Corporate organisation is increasingly turning towards flexibility and decentralization. The search for flexibility, the development of network-based cooperation, the increased use of subcontracting, the development of work in teams, are some of the consequences of information technology." (European Commision [White Paper] 1995, p. 22).

There are very major structural disadvantages for SMEs in respect of their need for CVT in order to maintain their competitiveness. In their analysis, Brandsma, Kessler and Münch sum up the situation of SMEs all over Europe as follows:

> „Not only SMEs have indeed recognised that continuing vocational training is particularly important for a company's success but it is frequently the case that the willingness to make the necessary expenditure is diametrically opposed to that realisation. The vast majority of companies behave in a procyclic manner: when business is bad they cut expenditure on continuing vocational training, in some cases to a disproportionate degree. They do not use continuing vocational training as a strategic potential. This form of behaviour which can be observed to a large degree in all Member States of the European Union is the reason why the measures for the promotion of continuing vocational training in SMEs outlined here are not as effective as they should be. Besides concrete assistance, what is even more important is considerable educational work." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 55)

In order to illustrate this observation by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch who describe this situation in respect of the CVT activities of SMEs as a general European trend, we will quote the results of research work in Germany, which has (in the context of the European FORCE program) analysed the degree of professionalisation of CVT in German enterprises (SMEs and large enterprises included):

Table 5:

Criteria of professionalized CVT activities in German enterprises

Criterions of professionalized CVT activities	Results
– Existence of plans or programs concerning CVT?	– 15% of the enterprises do not prepare plans or programs concerning CVT
– Existence of a department for CVT with organisational independence?	– Only 5% of the enterprises have a CVT department wit organisational independence
– Existence and realization of requirement analysis (with regard to personnel and qualification development)?	– 67% of the enterprises do not prepare requirement analysis concerning CVT (with regard to personnel and qualification development)
– Existence of employees, who work exclusively in the field of CVT?	– Only 3% of the enterprises have employees, who work exclusively (full-time or even only part-time) in the field of CVT
– Existence of a special budget for CVT within the enterprise?	– Only 10% of the enterprises have a special budget for CVT

Source: Grünewald/Moraal 1996, p. 60 f

As this synopsis shows, a very large proportion of CVT schemes in German enterprises are not carried out on a highly professionalised level. Generally it can be stated that for the above-mentioned reasons CVT activities in big enterprises are more professional than in SMEs and that this degree of professionalisation diminishes together with the size of the enterprise (related to number of employees, but also to the rate of turnover of SMEs; see Chapter 3 for more details).

And as a general trend it should be added that the degree of professionalisation is rather low compared with the degree of professionalisation in German initial vocational training (apprenticeship/dual system) (Grünewald/Moraal 1996, p. 60).

Given these problems, the situation of the SMEs in general and especially in relationship to the development and improvement of CVT in SMEs has become a focal point of interest in European policy.

1.1.4.1 Activitites of the European Commission for SMEs

CVT in SMEs is one of the most important ‚action fields' of the European programs. The enormous economic importance of SMEs has been stressed in several papers (see Memorandum 1991 and the White Papers 1993 and 1996). And the SMEs have already been a central subject in the FORCE Program, which preceded, as a CVT-specialised program, the Leonardo Program (the latter started in 1995 and comprised all activities of the European Union concerning VET and CVT).

The above-mentioned criteria of professionalised CVT-activities in enterprises were already an important focus in the context of the older FORCE program, which has been estimated to be the biggest European network for CVT (European Commission [Compendium], 1993, p. 5). During the three years up to 1995, 422 projects were implemented (76 exchange programs, 228 pilot projects, 119 qualifying projects) with 3,500 partners (among them 2,000 enterprises); (European Commission [Compendium] 1993, p. 5). The Commission remarks:

> „What is also noticeable is a marked increase in the future qualification needs of small and smallest enterprises... The involvement of small and smallest enterprises has increased markedly. 445 of the 780 proposals submitted involved small and medium-sized enterprises of associations of enterprises, mostly on a partnership basis. The total number of small and medium-sized enterprises involved has more than doubled from 420 to 1,000." (European Commission [Compendium], p. 15)

A glimpse at the „CEDEFOP European Research Directory" (CEDEFOP 1996) emphasises the fact that the above-mentioned structural disadvantages of SMEs concerning their possibilities in the field of CVT have indeed been an important focus of CVT activities especially within the context of the FORCE Program. In order to illustrate that the SME-related activities are increasing in quantity and quality as well, we would like to mention some examples of projects undertaken within the FORCE Program:

- The first example of a SME-related project is entitled: Pilot project for vocational qualification and retraining in the information science sector (Budget ECU 200,000 finished in June 1995) (CEDEFOP 1996 [Research Directory] Code I-02). As part of the FORCE Program its objectives have been to identify professional needs related to the advanced tertiary sector (information science) in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Calabria Region; to design innovative curricula and to implement a pilot curriculum. The methods used were an analysis of needs; the setting up innovative curricula and finally a test of the models. The aims of this project were to produce didactic material and to write a research report.
- The second example was entitled; „Training requirements for new skills in the fields of electronic maintenance, telecommunications and control" (Budget: ECU 75,000; finished 11/94) (CEDEFOP 1996 [Research Directory] Code P-24). Although it was not part of the FORCE Program, its objectives fit well into the conceptual framework of European development of CVT within SMEs: defining contents and methods for training adapted to new forms of work organisation in each of the sectors studied and developing modular continuing training suitable for firms in general and SMEs in particular. The methods used were a study of the sector, its demarcation and employment structure; a study of the predominant form of work organisation and typical occupations, an analysis of the content of qualifications involved, a description of corporate structure and development trends; a description of vocational training in the sector; assessment methods of analysis to define training needs; case studies and a study of present vocational training.
- The third example was entitled: „Training technical instructors in the clothing industry" (Budget: ECU 150,000; finished 12/93) (CEDEFOP 1996 [Research Directory] Code P-05). As part of the FORCE Program its objective was to prepare a training module for instructors in firms to equip them to identify and analyse particular training requirements. The method used was the design of a training module for in-house instructors, which was tested on a group to ensure its effectiveness in practice. Finally, a design was produced of technical and teaching aids for distribution to SMEs in the clothing industry.

This short glimpse demonstrates that the SMEs themselves and also the policy of the European Union are aware of the structural disadvantages concerning CVT within SMEs and that the EU is willing to invest in order to improve their competitiveness. And as a consequence of the experiences of the projects undertaken within the FORCE program and as a conclusion of the White Paper from 1993 as well, the European Council requested the European Commission in June 1995 to prepare a report on the importance of SMEs for the competitive capacity of the European economy. As a result, the Commission again formulated in March 1996 a decision (meanwhile the third one) for the years 1997 up to 2000 („Resolution of the Council of the European Commission concerning the promotion of SMEs" 1996). Amongst other things, this decision contains the following proposals:

- Simplification of the administrative procedures (besides the problem of financing CVT and organisational problems the lack of transparency is one of the most serious problems of SMEs (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 75);
- economic/financial support for those SMEs who are ‚job creators';
- promotion of the training of trainers;
- improvement of access to information;
- measures to improve the availability of enterprise data;
- strengthening of research in order to get more and precise statistical data concerning the 'SME' (Task of GD XIII in cooperation with Eurostat).

In addition to this, we should - concerning the activities of the European Commission – mention the measures taken within the diverse programs, which support the special needs of SMEs. Most of them are an integrated part of LEONARDO, and some of them are combined with further parts of the programs of the European Commission. In its White Paper (Teaching and Learning) 1996 the Commission quotes an example of such a SME related measure:

> „However, some progress has been made, for example ‚Ideals', a project supported under the Community's ‚Telematics' applications programme, has, in conjunction with SMEs and technical teaching establishments, made it possible to develop training for SMEs (databases, of course modules tailored to the requirements of the different SMEs involved), at the place of work or at local teaching centres." (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 36).

The impact and results are not easy to measure, and the Commission itself is very cautious by choosing the formulation „some progress has been made". But a survey in the context of the preceding FORCE Program shows that a very large number of the more than 700 projects has taken the special needs of SMEs into consideration (see above and Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 75). In general it can be stated, that there are increasing efforts (and increasing success) in several areas concerning the situation and especially the development of CVT within SMEs, as summed up by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 45 f.) in respect of the European trends (point 1 and 2) and existing activities (point 3-8):

1. increasing number of CVT-participants (in nearly all different forms of CVT) throughout Europe in the last two decades;
2. steadily growing rate of investment in CVT (mostly by enterprises);
3. external CVT-counselling (development of plans and strategies for CVT) as part of the organisational planning of enterprises;
4. promotion of CVT by wage agreements between the social partners;
5. establishment of sectoral funds for CVT in order to create new CVT structures for some sectors;
6. promotion of CVT by tax reduction, subsidies etc.;
7. intensification of contacts between SMEs and the institutions which offer CVT measures;
8. growing integration of CVT within the process of work and development of ‚learning cultures' in order to create the ‚learning enterprise' (see Staudt 1995, p. 193 ff.).

1.2 Theoretical aspects: CVT and the impact of the model the ‚Learning Society‘

Although the concept of the ‚Learning Society‘ was not explicitly mentioned in the European Commission's Memorandum (1991), an approach was outlined which stressed the central role of „intangible capital“ within the socio-economic context of the nineties:

> „The socio-economic environment in the nineties is characterised by the increasingly important role of the so-called „intangible capital“, i.e. not by occupational qualifications and technological know-how but by organisational skills and a corporate philosophy. European human resources are thus a creative and dynamic force of the Community area and must be viewed as a common resource which can be developed further by means of mobility, exchange and cooperation.“ (European Commission [Memorandum] 1991, point 15, p. 7)

Concerning the role of CVT, the Commission announced as a central consequence of this analysis that it would

> „therefore be ... absolutely essential to extend continuing training measures without limiting in any way the efforts to improve the training for young people“ (European Commission [Memorandum] 1991, point 12, p. 8).

Two years later, this approach of the Commission was given a more precise background in its White Paper (Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, 1993, p. 129):

> „The promotion of intangible investment must become a focus of general policy to relieve the overall strain on investment. Training, research and general technical and other knowledge must be treated as investments in their own right. (p. 72) ... „Training“ was the „catalyst in a society in transition“, and the expectation is „that it will help society to overcome its current problems: ... In a society which is oriented far more towards the production, transfer and common use of know-how than the exchange of goods, access to theoretical knowledge and practical know-how does indeed assume a key position.“

This concept is in a way the predecessor of the latest formulation of the „learning society“ (see European Commission [White Paper] 1996). Already in the 1993 White Paper this analysis of the changing structures within modernised European societies was – not only within the context of unemployment – closely connected with the postulation of enhancing CVT schemes. The 1993 White Paper (Growth, Competitiveness, p. 131) stated major shortcomings:

> „in insufficient development of continuing training systems and processes so far, in unequal access to this type of training, the limited continuing training opportunities for people working in SMEs etc.“.

In its last official report (1995) the Commission presented its concept of the ‚Learning Society‘, which was such a central focus that the term became part of the title of the whole analysis („Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society“). Although this is not a concept, which has – unlike the concept of the OECD term ‚Knowledge-Based Society – a strong theoretical base, it illustrates the focus of European thinking and political planning of the European Commission by saying that

> „this White Paper considers that European society is in a transitional phase towards a new form of society beyond current short-term forecasts“ (European Commission, 1996, p. 22).

In the face of the „internationalisation of trade, the dawning of the information society and the relentless march of science and technology, the Commission sees as one of „three important factors of upheaval“ (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 5 f.):

> „The impact of the information society: the main effects of this is to transform the nature of work and the organisation of production. Routine and repetitive tasks which used to be the daily lot of most workers are tending to disappear as more autonomous, more varied activities take their place. ... the role of the human factor is increasing but the worker is also more vulnerable to changes in patterns of work organisation because he has become a mere individual in a complex network. Everyone has to adapt not only to new technical tools but also to changes in working conditions.“

The political strategies (especially concerning strategies of education, VET and CVT) correspond closely to this analysis of modern societies as ‚learning societies' and try explicitly to mitigate the unintended effects of this process:

> „There is therefore a risk of a rift in society between those that can interpret; those who can only use; and those who are pushed out of mainstream society and rely upon social support: in other words, between those who know and those who do not know." (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 26)

From the point of view social policy, industrial policy and – naturally – also within the context of the policies concerning educational and vocational education, the most important postulate of the European Commission is to strengthen ‚human resources' by offering the chance of lifelong learning to the individuals living in the ‚learning society':

> „The substantial efforts made by the Member States, and supported by the Community through Socrates and Leonardo, to strengthen initial training must of course be pursued. But in parallel, we need to make the best use of skills and abilities irrespective of how they were obtained and to enhance everyone's potential by catering more closely for the needs of the individual, business and industry. What is needed is a more open and flexible approach. Such an approach should also encourage lifelong learning by allowing for and encouraging a continuing process of skill acquisition." (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 33)

The aim is „broadly based knowledge and employability" (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 6) in terms of the specific conditions of the changing occupation systems and labour markets in Europe. The close connection between the idea of lifelong learning and the concept of a ‚learning society', the ‚knowledge-based-society' and the highly consensual postulate to strengthen the efforts concerning continuing vocational education is obvious. And even those who are rejected by the formal systems of education, should be „encouraged to cultivate the skills they have" by using more informal pathways of vocational learning (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 34). Beneath the consensual strategy of strengthening the systems of CVT throughout Europe, the Commission tries to promote as a „modern route" a so-called „third way forward" (p. 33) by favouring a new accreditation concept:

> „This White Paper suggests a third way forward, which already exists in some Member States. This solution does not detract from the paper qualification, but on the contrary helps to maintain its quality and is to recognise partial skills on the basis of a reliable accreditation system. ... Accreditation could, of course, lead to the recognition on a broader basis of the technological knowledge acquired in a firm, which is currently more often than not evaluated solely for the company's use." (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 34)

Relating to its White Paper ‚Teaching and Learning' the Commission has launched an in-depth discussion on the guidelines for action and has established a study group of independent experts. On the basis of this White Paper in December 1996 it formulated a report „Accomplishing Europe through Education and Training". The views expressed by the members of the study group were not made on behalf of an individual Member State because the experts concerned were nominated as free researchers by the Commission and not by the Member States. But nevertheless the results of the report confirm the guidelines of the preceding White Paper. Especially concerning the theory of the above-mentioned concept of the ‚learning society', the experts state:

> „If lifelong learning becomes an aim fully adopted by governments and takes on tangible form, the coming years will become a benchmark in the history of education. ... Many analyses of contemporary and future social and cultural models underline the need for this wide, all-encompassing view of education as a developing, lifelong process. Modern society will be a learning society and Europe will have a dominant place in that society if this educational concept is fully developed." (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p.49)

There is no doubt that the concept of the ‚learning society' will be an important model for future education policies of all European societies, and it is obvious that CVT will be an important focus of this subject.

2. OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONS, FORMS AND STRUCTURES OF CVT IN EUROPE

The first chapter of the analyses in hand has outlined the common challenges presented by the process of change within all European societies towards a ‚knowledge-based' or ‚learning society'. Whereas Chapter 3 concerns more detailed aspects of CVT and stresses the heterogeneous character of the implementation of CVT within the European Member States, this second chapter tries (as far as possible) to outline common structures of the European CVT systems (concerning central objectives, functions, forms and organisational structures of the CVT systems as well).

2.1 Objectives of CVT in the European Member States

As mentioned in the first chapter, the most important challenge facing European societies and especially the labour markets CVT systems is the fact that they all have to cope with very similar challenges, which are caused by ubiquitous processes of social and economic change. Because of these common challenges, the objectives of the different strategies concerning the CVT policies are rather similar.

This is not only restricted to Europe. The OECD has, in its ‚Jobs Study' from 1994, identified three main areas concerning the objectives of VET and CVT for its member countries. The OECD calls for improvements to the following elements in order to guarantee a stronger relationship between the systems of education and training (VET and CVT as well) on the one hand and the labour markets on the other hand:

1. „the quality of initial education;
2. the transition from initial education to employment and
3. continuing investment in learning during adult life"; (OECD 1996 [Education/Analysis], p. 42, see also OECD [Job-Study] 1994).

In relation to labour market policies and more general trends such as „technological development, the globalisation of the economy and high unemployment in many OECD countries", the OECD sums up the objectives of CVT in general as „promoting economic growth and ... enhancing the development of society" (OECD [Indicators] 1995, p. 140). And defined in a more specific manner, we can distinguish the following more detailed objectives concerning the world of work on the one hand and the world outside work as well (see OECD [Indicators] 1995, p. 141 f.):

Training for investment: CVT objectives concerning the world of work:

- economic objectives (improving the efficiency, productivity and profitability of work organisation and hence raising individual earnings and, eventually, national income);
- the prevention of skills obsolescence;
- the alleviation of the specific problems of high-risk groups with a relative weak attachment to the national labour markets (the initially poorly educated, women, older employees, workers employed in labour markets undergoing ‚structural adjustment', school-leavers lacking adequate prospects for an occupational career);
- the fulfilment of the demand for social and democratic development within the European societies;
- personal development and by doing this
- ensuring that the material needs of working and learning individuals are satisfied.

Training for consumption: The role of CVT outside the world of work:

- social psychological factors (self confidence, self realisation etc.).;
- education directed towards cultural participation and social competence.

This two-sided structure of CVT objectives very often becomes one-sided in the face of the constraints of the economy and labour market policies. As the OECD states, the main tendency is for „many governments to give priority to the labour market functions of CET" (OECD

[Indicators] 1995, p. 142). But from a pedagogical point of view, CVT has to pursue very many and very different objectives although the economic objectives may not be excluded.

A. CVT is a question of social policy:

CVT should follow a policy which could be summed up as the principle of ‚promoting winners and compensating losers‘. CVT contents have to be tailored more to the conditions of the modern world of work within a knowledge-based society: Not only the highly skilled workers should be given an opportunity to adapt to the needs emerging from our modernised world of work but also disadvantaged people must get the chance to find access to the different labour markets. And the ‚labour market admission ticket‘ for those without formal qualifications or qualifications for example in the New Technologies, is the acquisition of skills relevant on the labour markets. Vice versa, this touches on the next postulation which also concerns the necessary contents of CVT especially for disadvantaged people on the European labour markets:

B. CVT as a question of combating social inequality by promoting processes of democratisation and participation:

This postulation means at first sight easy access to CVT (as inexpensive as possible, if not free) for as many people as possible and secondly the provision of equal opportunities within the fields of education, VET and CVTI. In this context, the above-mentioned study group also states „The development of vocational training is also a decisive factor in consolidating the democratisation of education. Today, all the Member States have a wide range of training options to meet the requirements both of the labour market and of individuals themselves, and to encourage continuing vocational training“ (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p. 43, point 130).

C. CVT as a learning process, which must impart or build on broadly based knowledge:

Concerning the relationship between the education system and VET, the study group has stated that „general education must provide preparation for a vocational skill, and vocational training must continue to develop the basic competencies imparted by general education (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p. 28, point 102). More precisely, the consequence of this demand has been formulated by the Commission in its White Paper Teaching and Learning (1995, p. 31). Technical knowledge is knowledge which permits clear identification with an occupation. It is acquired partly within the vocational education and training system and partly on the job. This knowledge has substantially changed with the advent of information technology and the breakdown of demarcation lines between occupations. Within this framework of knowledge, certain ‚key skills‘ are central to a number of different occupations and therefore essential in order to be able to change jobs. Basic training in information technology across the board has, therefore, become a necessity“. These are contents which refer to measures of initial vocational training but they are without any doubt central subjects for the field of CVT, too.

D. CVT as an important medium for the development of social and extra-functional qualifications:

This point refers to the fact that the introduction of New Technologies not only affects the technical process of production, but also the surrounding conditions of work. Especially the organisation of work is changing radically and this process leads to new demands concerning the skills and qualification of workers. In this context, CVT may become the task of „teaching people to work as part of a group (*inter alia* by using information technologies)“. „This also calls for progress to identify the skills acquired through group work, to accredit group work in the same way as individual work, and to introduce and gain acceptance for the unambiguous evaluation of individual behavioural skills, in particular communication skills, leadership and problem-solving“ (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p. 28, point 102). Similar to this, the White Paper (European Commission 1996, p. 31) outlined the central role of „social aptitudes" concerning „inter-personal skills, i.e. behaviour at work and a whole range of skills corresponding to the level of responsibility held such as the ability to cooperate and work as a part of a team, creativeness and the quest for quality. Full mastery of these skills can be acquired only in a working environment and therefore mainly on the job". This last sentence underlines the preference of the Commission for apprenticeship systems of vocational education, but the idea of ‚learning on the job' is also (see for example the United Kingdom) a kind of vocational learning which is used in the field of continuing training.

E. CVT as a medium which prepares the skills needed in future:

Although it is not possible to predict exactly the skills and qualifications needed in future, there is at least the obvious general trend in the actual and further development of knowledge-based societies. One central characteristic is the increasing speed of economic development but also in respect of the need to learn or to adapt new skills and qualifications related to the basic model of the ‚information society'. Therefore, the Study Group summed this up as follows: „A major requirement is for training to play more of a proactive rather than a reactive role (for instance, retraining plans for the unemployed) for the entire workforce. At the moment, forward-looking training that aims to anticipate changes in occupational and task activities is still almost exclusively restricted to management" (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p. 44 f.). CVT has to be extended and professionalised throughout Europe in order to fulfil the demands of this ubiquitous process of the dawning of the information society. This leads to the next central issue of CVT.

F. CVT as a medium to reach greater flexibility and adaptability:

The widespread postulation of greater flexibility and adaptability has direct effects on the contents and subjects of CVT. CVT measures must reflect the actual and future demands of the employment systems of the ‚knowledge-based societies'. CVT is one of the most important instruments to reach a very high degree of convergency between the actual needs of the employment systems and the available vocational qualifications. And at the same time CVT is a very well suited instrument to adapt people in a very short time to the new qualification needs of the labour markets (presuming a broadly based education and initial vocational training). Concerning the contents of CVT, this does mean a very strong focus on the subjects and contents of learning which reflect the nature of the learning society to a very high degree (e.g. New Technologies etc.).

Concerning the structure of objectives which have been achieved or should at least be achieved within CVT, it is – though with some restrictions – possible to class the several above-mentioned objectives of CVT in line with the three different players: government, enterprises and individuals:

1. The governmental social policy primarily takes care of disadvantaged people by offering them a first or second chance of qualification. Some of these activities are on the European level and there are also the several programs of the European Commission launched in the context of LEONARDO. Especially relevant in this context are the European supports for CVT by ESF (European Social Fund). Mainly the Mediterranean Member States, but also the eastern part of Germany have benefited from this fund, which promotes almost exclusively disadvantaged and high-risk target groups. (predominant types of CVT: curative-compensative, and – but on a clearly smaller scale – preventive-cumulative).
2. The enterprises promote CVT exclusively for employed people in order to improve their economic productivity and competitiveness and also in order to promote the degree of innovation of the enterprise (predominant types of CVT: cumulative-preventive and compensative-curative. What is also important for enterprises is the innovative function of CVT).
3. The individuals pursue their personal and career interests by improving their professional prospects by attending CVT programmes or they try to compensate their lack of qualification in order to (re-)enter the employment system (predominant types of CVT: a) for unemployed

and disadvantaged people by making good the lack of formal qualifications or acquiring a first basic qualification; b) for employed and almost qualified people by adapting and upgrading skills).

2.2 Main functions of CVT

CVT must be oriented towards clearly defined objectives. In addition to this, CVT must at the same time fulfil very important functions concerning the allocation of qualified individuals in the labour markets and giving individuals an opportunity to promote their career as well. Therefore, the functions of CVT closely follow the different target groups and the special needs of the labour markets on the one hand and the needs of the individuals as well. In their analysis of the FORCE Program, the authors Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 22) have outlined six different functions of CVT which are linked with different target groups and strategies concerning the labour market and the policies referring to this labour market:

- „Anpassungsfunktion“ (CVT as a means of adapting vocational qualifications to the changing challenges of labour markets, e.g. New Technologies);
- „Innovationsfunktion“ (CVT as part of the development strategies of personnel departments in enterprises in order to make innovation in enterprises possible by upgrading skills by means of CVT for their (normally already high qualified) employees;
- „Aufstiegsfunktion“ (upgrading skills in order to upgrade career; mostly measures for qualified and employed people up to an age of 35 or 40 years);
- „Nachholfunktion“ (upgrading skills in the case of inadequate, very often schemes for target groups such as school drop-outs, the long-term unemployed or immigrants; frequently, the goal of these schemes is the acquisition of a basic qualification e.g. France);
- „kurative Funktion“ (curative function, mostly a task reserved for governmental action within the context of social and labour market policies. Together with the „Nachholfunktion“ that means skill upgrading. This function of CVT is normally reserved for governmental action);
- „präventive Funktion“ (preventive function, mostly a function, which is a point of focal interest for the enterprises and especially for gainfully employed individuals who do not want to acquire vocational skills, which are actually missing, but who want to acquire skills they probably need in future in order to stay employed or even to upgrade their vocational position); An alternative term for describing the last two functions „kurative“ and „präventive Funktion“ are the terms „cumulative CVT“ and „compensative CVT“.

Whereas compensative CVT corresponds to curative CVT, the ‚cumulative function‘ of CVT corresponds to the term of ‚preventive CVT‘. ‚Curative‘ or ‚compensative‘ CVT normally figures as an important and integrated part of state social and labour market policy (which aims primarily to provide support for the subjective interests of individuals lacking vocational qualifications). The types ‚cumulative‘ and ‚compensative CVT‘ describe the functions of CVT measures by objective terms of needs of the occupation system and especially of the labour market: They are not normally part of governmental strategies of steering labour market policy (or social policy) but serve as a strategy for the qualification of qualified (and employed) people. Therefore these qualification schemes are usually attended by the employed and highly or even very highly qualified employees and enterprises.

In general it can be stated that a measure taken within a CVT program takes on a cumulative or a preventive character if this measure is provided within the employment system (i.e. by an enterprise or by an employed and qualified individual). Contrary to this, the curative and compensative function is a central field of activity of governmental social policy and is normally designed for groups at risk on the labour markets, i.e. the unemployed, less or unqualified people, who try to reenter or even to enter the labour market for the first time.

Naturally, the preventive or cumulative function of CVT should be and is at least theoretically a kind of measure which has to be implemented by governmental action because such measures try to protect individuals from the risks on the labour market (e.g. the risk of unemployment).

But given the growing rate of unemployment throughout Europe, the reality has proved that government intervention in this field (cumulative/preventive) has become less and less since the early eighties. For example, the German situation demonstrates that CVT measures financed by public investment on the basis of the so-called ‚AFG‘ (Arbeitsförderungsgesetz - Employment Promotion Act) have since become almost exclusively measures with a curative or compensative character. It can be said of the eastern parts of Germany in particular but also of the German labour market as a whole that the constraints of the German labour market (first and foremost, increasing unemployment) have caused „a move away from a preventive employment policy to a purely curative policy“ (Münk/Lipsmeier 1997, p. 111).

It is evident that these ‚economic constraints‘ which are primarily caused by the crisis on the labour market, are in general similar throughout Europe – an observation which is also confirmed by the analysis of Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 21). They confirm a European trend towards a concentration of measures offering a (first or second) chance of re-entering the employment system (i.e. obtaining a first basic vocational qualification and adapting the qualifications of the unemployed to the actual demands of the employment system as well):

> „This type of adaptation training (or occupational reactivation) will undoubtedly become increasingly important... Given the growing number of long-term unemployed, it is a matter of regenerating their ability to learn and work which has been impaired by the long duration of unemployment and to adapt their reduced qualifications repertoire to the current demands of the world of work.“ (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 21)

In order to summarise the preceding analysis of the different functions of CVT, the authors will try to illustrate a structure of the European Member States by putting together a classification. Although each attempt to produce a structured classification does not hold true if one examines the details, the authors do think that it is possible to categorise the European CVT systems by the distinctive features ‚function‘ and ‚responsible body‘. Some restrictions apply for various Member States: Belgium and Luxembourg have recently undergone structural changes and (possibly because of this) there is a lack of data. Some other countries (IRL, S, I, GR, P) receive a lot of financial aid from the EU (ESF, EFRE). To a certain extent, (fund support) this is comparable to the role and tasks of governmental social policy. But seen in a structural perspective, the authors think that the following classification holds true in a general sense and that it outlines at least a coarsely-grained structure of CVT systems in Europe:

Table 6:

Classification of EU CVT systems related to the function of CVT and the responsible body

body responsible for CVT	compensative CVT	cumulative CVT
Enterprises	UK; SWE	A, G, NL
Government or EU* (ESF; EFRE)	B, F, FL, IRL*, S*, I*, GR*, P*	DK, L

See Puvogel 1996, p. 86 and additions by the authors.

2.3 Contents and themes of CVT

In its report „Accomplishing Europe through education and training“, the Study Group stated on the basis of the European Commission's White Paper ‚Teaching and learning‘ (1996) „three major requirements for an education strategy“. The first and most important refers to the correlation between technological development (especially of the new Technologies) and the needs of training and education. In their opinion the central focus of educational policy must be on:

> „the need to strengthen European competitiveness in economic, technological, innovatory scientific and organisational terms. ... But we must better prepare our people to use their potential to the full in the global world which is taking shape. This inevitably implies solid

> basic training, teaching/learning methods suited to the new patterns of behaviour and the new technologies essential in the workplace, and education and training establishments capable of learning and moving with the times. The new technologies open up significant prospects, in the world of education and training, too, provided we become involved in shaping them and provided as many people as possible have access to them and are able to use them. From this point of view, the members of the Study Group have stressed the slowness with which we are adapting our educational systems to these new demands, the lack of widespread introduction of technological innovation in schools and in teaching/learning methods, the lack of consideration given to teachers' roles and situations, and the slow development of lifelong learning." (Study Group 1996, p. 4, point 10 (i))

With regards to the contents of CVT the European Commission's White Paper from 1993 also outlines the important influences of New Technologies and their effects on the social and economic organisation of modern societies:

> „Information and communication technologies are in the process of radically changing the many sides of social life, e.g. work methods and relation, the organisation of companies, the core areas of initial and further training (p. 101) ... The transition to an information society imposes stiff requirements and calls for an ability to cope with change. The risk of cultural alienation or, to phrase this more generally, the risk of a society developing at different speeds because of a lack of corresponding qualification, should not be underestimated. It is important to find more employment opportunities for those individuals who face difficulties when it comes to integration into an increasingly complex and demanding world of work. Social responsibility in this context must be shouldered both by companies and the state." (European Commission [White Paper Competitiveness] 1993, p. 103)

Consequently for the fields of VET and CVT this White Paper concludes that „given the pressure of competition on European industry ... all employees need increasingly extensive specialised knowledge" and have to be capable „of successfully using the New Technologies" (European Commission [White Paper Competitiveness] 1993, p. 108).

Agreeing with these demands of the European Commission, the authors sum up its explanations concerning the contents and themes of CVT as follows: CVT measures throughout Europe must, on the one hand, focus very strongly on the New Technologies and the learning impact of the ‚information society' (concerning the vocational skills) and, on the other, meet the needs of the changing structure of work organisation by taking into consideration the social competencies which are necessary to cope with the challenges of the modern world of work (e.g. communication and interpersonal skills, the ability to cooperate and work as a part of a team, creativeness, the ability to solve problems and so on).

Unfortunately, we do not have concrete information about the content of CVT schemes in all European Member States. Instead of an analysis relating to all European Member States, the authors take by way of example the situation in Germany because Germany has a very detailed analysis of the entrepreneurial measures implemented in CVT. This German example shows that the quantitative most important providers of CVT are at the same time those sectors which have reached a rather high degree of modernisation (see table 7).

Table 7:

Breakdown into areas of all internal and internal seminars conducted by companies in 1993

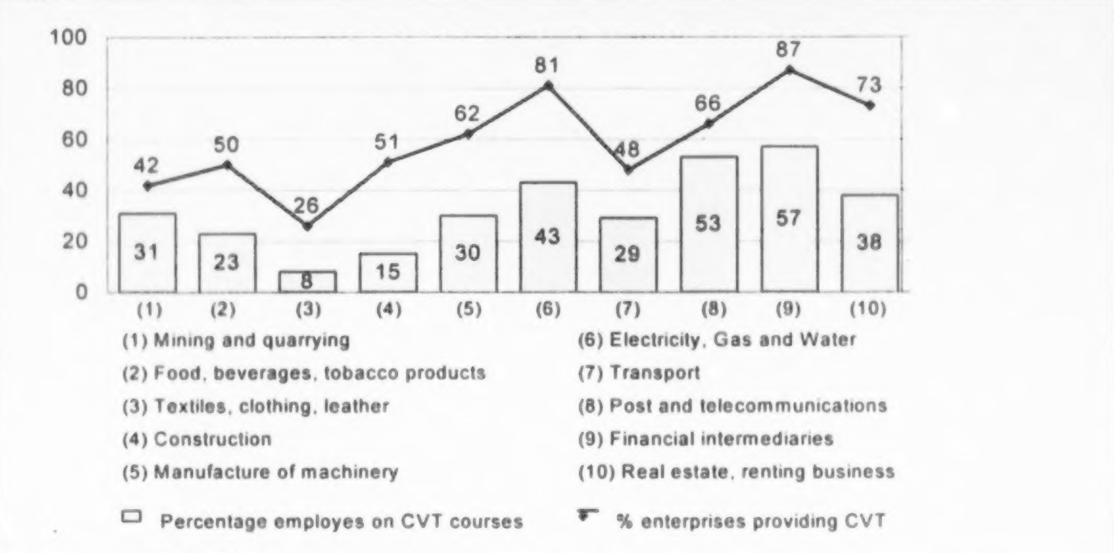
Commercial-administrative courses/sales training:	33 %
Work techniques, personnel development planning etc.	22%
EDP/Information technology:	21 %
Technical courses:	16 %
Language courses:	4 %
Safety at work and environmental protection	4 % (Schmidt 1996, p. 99)

This strong correlation fits very well into the concept of a knowledge-based society (focal point: development towards third sector, service industries). Ant, Kintzelé and Walther have identified a similar trend in Denmark and mention in their synopsis as the following subjects as the main contents of CVT: „public or private administration, information technology, sales, marketing, continuing in banking, insurance and health" (Ant/Kintzelé/Walther 1996, p. 232).

In addition to this, some general results of the currently unpublished CVT survey (FORCE 1993) also clearly document that those sectors, which are leading into the ‚information society' have at the same time the highest percentage rate of CVT measures:

Figure 5:

Sectors, CVT courses and employees participating in CVT



Source: Eurostat-CVTS 1994

As the above figure illustrates it is obvious that highly modernised sectors have a very high percentage of enterprises, which offer CVT measures and which, at the same time, offer these CVT measures for a very high percentage of their employees. According to the above chart, it can generally be stated that CVT plays, in markedly modernised sectors (e.g. financial intermediates/banking and insurance, post and telecommunications), an important role concerning both the percentage of enterprises offering CVT and the percentage of their employees participating in CVT measures. The reverse also holds true: sectors such as textiles/clothing/leather or construction have a very low degree of CVT activities concerning both the percentage of enterprises offering CVT and the percentage of their employees participating in CVT measures.

In relation to the subjects and contents of the CVT courses on offer and actually attended, this allows the conclusion that in respect of technical knowledge the subject New Technologies and in respect of general competencies upgrading courses for the acquirement of social competencies (see for this: the objectives of CVT) make up a central part of the scheme. To put this more generally, there is a strong preference for those subjects and themes which have a close relationship to the basics of the ‚knowledge-based society'. Although we do not have data for all European Member States, the authors suppose that these subjects represent a general trend throughout Europe – and if not in some countries, the authors are sure that in future attention should focus on these subjects.

2.4 Forms of CVT

It is rather difficult to present a general view of the different forms of CVT offered within the European Member States. This is related to the fact that we do not have a consistent and complete data set concerning the whole field of CVT throughout Europe, but also to the fact that there is no agreed definition about the phenomenon „CVT". This is also stressed by Bransma, Kessler and Münch 1995 (p. 14 ff.), who state, that for example the Flemish community of Belgium, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom do not have a definition of CVT at all.

Naturally this does not mean that these Member States do not know any form or type of CVT but they do not have a precise definition of CVT. Possibly this is why the field of CVT in these Member States is even more heterogeneous than in other Member States or the reason is that these Member States have an even lower degree of governmental regulation or institutionalisation than the others.

Therefore, it makes sense, to take as a basis for such a definition of CVT subjects and contents with a very broad based spectrum of categories in order to cover nearly all specific variants of CVT offered within the education systems of the concerned Member States. For example the OECD defines CVT as

> „CET - Continuing Education and Training: as all kinds of general and job-related education and training organised, financed or sponsored by authorities, provided by employers or self-financed. Included in the definition are training courses on the job as well as off the job, and courses for adults leading to an educational qualification. Military training and full-time studies at ISCED levels 5, 6 and 7 are excluded." (OECD [Indicators] 1995, p. 39)

The broad definition of CVT formulated by the CEDEFOP within the context of the formulation of our task of undertaking an analysis of CVT is as follows:

> „The term ‚continuing vocational training' is used to cover all types of post-initial vocational training and lifelong learning – whether or not organised, whether school based or at the workplace, etc. and irrespective of the nature of their funding, organisation and target group" (CEDEFOP 1997)

This preferred strategy of a very broad definition also holds true for the recommendations of the Study Group:

> „Today, all the Member States have a wide range of training options to meet the requirements both of the labour market and of individuals themselves, and to encourage continuing vocational training. Publicly funded initial vocational training programs for young people have also undergone significant development, in both school-based systems (France, Sweden and Finland) and in practice-oriented systems (Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and the UK), which also include 'off-the-job' training in technical colleges or vocational educational establishments. Training provision for adults is very diverse; here the private sector plays a considerable role, and individual initiative, in general, predominates. ...
> The challenges today are, clearly, to extend a wide palette of training opportunities to all age groups, and to take account of new forms of paid work, particularly part-time work and self-employment. Finally, a major requirement is for training to play more of a proactive than a reactive role (for instance, retraining plans for the unemployed) for the entire workforce. At the moment, forward-looking training that aims to prepare in advance for changes in occupational and task activities is still almost exclusively restricted to management. Nevertheless, in some countries considerable progress has been made: for example, in August 1996 the Swedish government announced that in the next five years, significant efforts will be made to promote adult education." (Study Group on Education and Training 1996, p. 44 f.)

Given these problems of definitions, the subject of this chapter ‚forms of CVT in Europe' describes the way and the context of the transfer of vocational knowledge. The traditional forms of CVT are job-related courses of instruction which are offered and organised for example in the form of short-term seminars. This traditional form of CVT may be offered first as internal courses within the enterprise, with the responsibility of the enterprises, with the staff of the enterprise or (at least) with the enterprise as the executive body. The second possibility are external courses. This means that the CVT courses are provided by external institutions, persons or enterprises which offer their courses on the free market. The responsibility for the form, contents and the organisation of such external courses is normally held exclusively by the providers.

Table 8 and figure 6 illustrate, that most of the enterprises decide themselves more often to fulfil their needs of qualification by external courses (67 %) than by internal courses (40%). Although this does not mean that the decision for the one form excludes at the same time any other, it is nevertheless obvious that external courses are offered more often than internal courses. This is a European trend which also holds true for example for the German situation (see Schmidt 1996, p. 79). The German results, which have in general a strong structural similarity with the above-mentioned ‚European average', also confirm a European trend in that the number of external and internal CVT-courses increases together with the size of enterprises and that within all size classes of enterprises the number of external courses is higher than that of internal courses (see Schmidt 1996, p. 79).

Table 8:

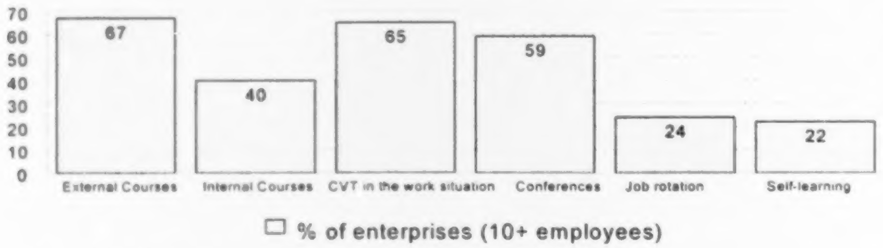
Forms of CVT (%)

external courses	internal courses	CVT within the work situation	conferences	job rotation	self-learning
67	40	66	59	24	22

Source: (CVT-Survey 1994, p. 3)

Figure 6:

Different forms of CVT undertaken by providers 1993 - EUR 12



Source: Eurostat-CVTS 1994

What is comparable to the European situation is probably the German result that the sectors banking (99.1 %) and insurance (90.2) have a much higher percentage rate of such internal and external courses than for example the sectors of construction ((53.4%), food/beverages ((46.2%), textiles/clothing (36.7 %) and hotels and restaurants (24.4%). The percentage rates may differ in the various Member States but we are relatively sure that the relationship between the sectors is similar throughout Europe. The same trend will also be identified concerning the question of access and participation of CVT in different sectors of the economy (see chapter 3).

The third meaningful and important form of CVT is CVT within the work situation; throughout Europe this accounts for 66 %. The decisive characteristics of this form of transfer of vocational, job-related knowledge are in general:

- that the learning process follows a well defined plan;
- that the focus of interest is on the process of vocational learning and not on the production of goods, which are eventually produced within the context of this learning process;
- that there is a more or less professionalised and experienced instructor, who is able to transfer the knowledge needed (possibly supported by media such as books or videos etc.).

Again because of the lack of more specified data the authors have to extrapolate the main trends from the German situation. Based on the German experiences, we suppose, that the most useful form of this CVT in the work situation is coaching by senior workers, followed by training of new employees and by training which is prompted by the introduction of new technologies (see Schmidt 1996, p. 85). Although there are several forms of work-related transfer of vocational knowledge such as quality circles or exchange programs with other enterprises, we believe that in most of the European Member States these forms are not more (or less) important than in Germany.

The percentage degree of participation in CVT-related conferences (or visits to trade exhibitions or of job-related lectures), which are relevant for vocational knowledge, make up 59 %. The German equivalent of this value is 71.9 %, whereas the percentage degree of job rotation as an instrument and form of CVT makes up 24 %. Especially the Member States of northern Europe (Denmark) make use of this very modern form of CVT.

Self-learning as the last form of CVT, which is mentioned by the European CVT survey, has at the same time the lowest percentage (22 %) among all forms of CVT. The authors suppose that this result hides important tendencies of vocational learning. For the enterprises this form of vocational learning helps to contain costs; for the individuals, self-learning is connected with a higher degree of autonomy concerning their time schedule and the CVT contents as well. In addition to this, self-learning is a decentral form of learning and this decentralisation is one of the strongest tendencies we know (see for example the role of regions, the demand for higher autonomy of social players etc.). And finally, the progress of New Technologies and especially of multimedia makes a rise of this form of learning very probable – the same probably holds for the increase in open distance learning (ODL). The authors suppose that there is a very simple reason for this very low rate of self-learning-CVT in the statistics. It is almost impossible to make exact evaluations and very often the enterprises have no or at least very low costs. This has the effect that they do not cover such learning activities of their employees in their statistics.

In order to back the theory of a generally growing trend towards forms of self-learning in CVT with some more empirical evidence, the authors quote the report from the European Commission on this subject:

> „The principle of open, flexible and individually shaped initial training schemes stands on the political agenda in almost all Member States for an opportunity for improved access to vocational training measures for a wider target group. More and more efforts are being channelled into developing self-study techniques at the workplace and methods of open learning and distance learning. Increasing use is being made in this context of new technologies e.g. computer-aided instruction or multimedia learning systems. Almost everywhere the opportunities of the Internet for the learning process and a few other measures are being examined everywhere in order to use new technologies for distance learning." (European Commission/Report 1997, p. 26).

The European Commission adds, that especially in Norway, in the UK, in the Dutch- speaking part of Belgium and Finland learning opportunities linked with the new information technologies and distance learning (DL) are among the most discussed issues concerning the forms and methods of CVT.

This strong focus on vocational learning made possible by modern technologies at the same time demands the development of new arrangements of teaching and learning (the development of new learning material included). The report of the Commission quotes examples from France, Denmark, Luxembourg, Portugal and the UK; and the report sumps up this subject in the following manner:

> „Therefore, it could almost be said that all training experts who work in educational research centres, institutes for technology transfer, educational institutions and universities and trade unions, too, are addressing the issue of the development of computer-aided courses or courses based on other multimedia." (European Commission/Report 1997, p. 26)

2.5 Structures of CVT systems in Europe

In a comparative analysis about „The coherence of compulsory education, initial and continuing training and adult education in countries of the European Economic Area“, the authors forecast the following for the future development of education and training in Europe:

> „Education and training in the 21st century will be a complex mixture of short and long courses, updating of skills and upgrading of qualifications, with a variety of modes of learning including open and flexible learning, multimedia and the recognition of skills and knowledge acquired from life and work. Many of the countries in the EEA (European Economic Area) have already begun to introduce such a pattern." (Guildford 1995, p. 51)

The European tendency in vocational education towards a ‚pattern of complex mixture' seems to become more and more reality. And also the definition of CVT by CEDEFOP,[3] which is the basis for our analysis illustrates that CVT covers very different patterns of vocational learning. But nevertheless there are some central functions of CVT which depend directly upon the anchoring system of vocational education. CVT plays an important role concerning

- the transition from education to the labour market (transition to working life);
- the upgrading of chances (e.g. of disadvantaged/unemployed people) to reenter the labour market;
- improving the chances of employed people remaining within the occupation system and promoting their vocational career by improving their vocational qualifications.

Given this, it seems to be obvious that there is a strong relationship between the organisation and institutionalisation of this kind of labour market and especially of the system of initial vocational training on the one hand and of the general structure, organisation and tasks of the CVT systems on the other. Most of the structural aspects of CVT are affected by the two questions: (1) if a Member State has a highly professionalised system of initial vocational training or not and (if this is the case) (2) how this initial vocational training is organised.

The easiest differentiation of types of initial training is the decision for a special learning venue, in other words, the question whether a system is school based, apprenticeship based or whether it prefers mainly work based methods of training on the job (e.g. UK). The decision in favour of one of these alternatives has strong implications and effects many other structural aspects of CVT (e.g. financing, institutional regulations, degree of the governmental steering capacity, certification and recognition, standardisation etc.). Therefore the authors will follow this decisive differentiation of learning venues by analysing the general structures of European CVT systems.

Before doing this, it must be (because of the above-mentioned variety of European CVT systems) underlined that this differentiation is valid only on a very general level. A typology of this nature of learning venues only holds true in the sense that a decision for a special learning venue describes the dominant type of learning venue within a varied system of vocational training. Taking an example, we refer to the learning venues within apprenticeship systems. We find in all 15 Member States parts of the system of vocational training which are undertaken by different variants of apprenticeship. But in most of the countries, this makes up only a rather small quantitative part of the whole system of VET (e.g. during 1991: 5.4% in Wallonia (B) and 3.1% in Flanders (B); 12% in Spain, 10% in France, 4% in Greece, 17% in Ireland, 7.5% in Italy, 33% in Luxembourg, 12 % in the Netherlands, 6% in Portugal, and about 45% in UK; the latter Member State has such a specific structure that the quota of 45% is not comparable to the other rates of percentage (see NiCheallaigh 1995, p. 40).

Nevertheless, we find apprenticeship as a really dominant system of initial vocational training mainly in the German-speaking Member States Germany and Austria and also (although not dominant but at least high rated) in Denmark with about 50% (see for this and the following remarks figures 7 and 8..

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[3] This definition is as follwos: „The term ‚continuing vocational training' is used to cover all types of post-initial vocational training and lifelong learning – whether or not organised, whether school based or at the work-place, etc. and irrespective of the nature of their funding, organisation and target group" (CEDEFOP 1997).

Following a recent OECD analysis (OECD [Analysis] 1996, p. 51), we find in Europe two Member States (UK and Sweden), whose scheme of VT cannot be exactly classified, but who have at least a structure which puts considerable emphasis on the connection between working and learning (e.g. training on the job in the United Kingdom).

The third category of Member States is made up by those which have mainly school-based programs of initial vocational training, that is they have a model which is not as closely connected to the world of work as for example the apprenticeship-based systems (Luxembourg, Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, France, Italy; see OECD [Analysis] 1996, p. 51 and additions by the authors).

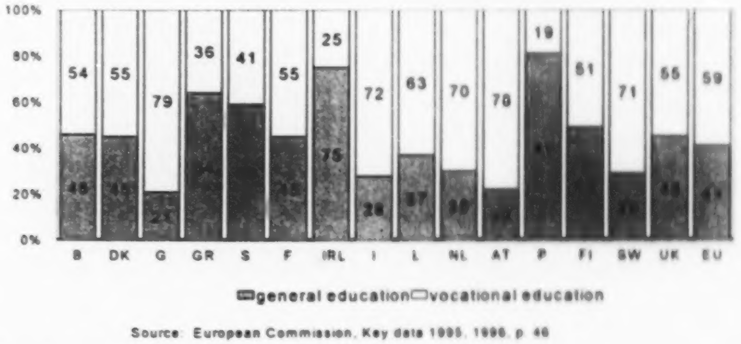
The above-mentioned three models of VET have in common that within the secondary level (ISCED 3) more than 50% take place within the field of vocational education. Concerning the question of learning venues there is on the other hand a second group of four Member States, where vocational education on the secondary level takes place to more than 50% in the field of general education. These countries are Spain (59%), Greece (64%), Ireland (75%) and Portugal (81%). Concerning these two higher categories of countries (related to degree of percentage of vocational and general education on a secondary level), it can be stated that referring to all European Member States the systems with a dominant tendency towards vocational education within the secondary level make up the bigger part (59%) in comparison to those countries, which are dominated by general education on the secondary level (41%; see figure 7).

The decision if favour of one of these two basic models (domination of general education on secondary level or of vocational education with its three alternatives apprenticeship-type, school based or training on the job) has strong effects on the status quo of the labour market or the employment occupation system concerning the degree of governmental steering in the field of VET and CVT, the necessity of certification and standardisation of measures taken in the field of CVT and naturally concerning the relationship and the degree of linkage between the VET system and the CVT system.

CVT becomes important on the one hand immediately at the beginning and on the other hand during the whole phase of working life. One of the most crucial points is the transition from the education system to the labour market. In the words of the OECD, this concerns the „process of moving from being a non-working student to being a non-studying worker" (OECD Analysis, 1996 p. 44). Hence CVT measures concern theoretically the working process during people's entire lives, but this crucial phase of transition from education to work (which is often very difficult) is also a decisive problem for CVT.

Figure 7:

Proportion of students at secondary level in schools of general education and vocational education (1992/93)



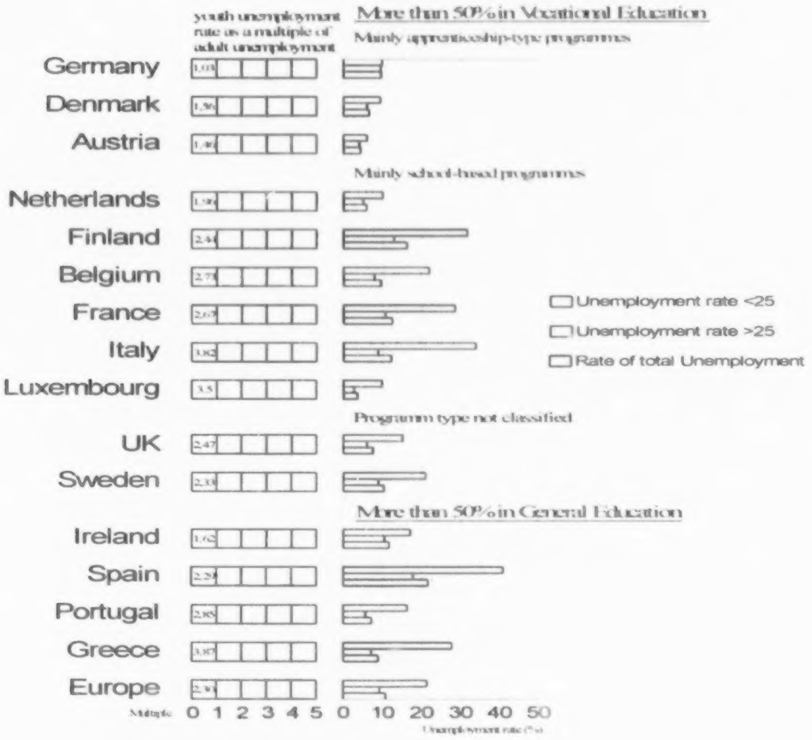
Source: European Commission, Key figures 1995, 1996, p. 46

For both phases of working life, that means both the transition and the ensuing years of working life, CVT normally figures as an important instrument to promote vocational qualifications. In this context, the crucial question is in what way and by which means the first phase of vocational education was acquired. The following analysis tries to outline the impacts of the two basic models: first education systems with more than 50% of young people in vocational education (secondary level, included the variants apprenticeship, training on the job and school based models) and second education systems with more than 50% of young people in general education on the secondary level.

Figure 8:

Age dependent unemployment by school system type (1997)

Proportion of upper secondary enrolments



Source: Eurostat News Release Nr. 35/97, see the similar figure
OECD, Education at a glance/Analysis, 1996, p. 51

2.5.1 *Education systems with more than 50% of young people in vocational education on the secondary level*

2.5.1.1 Apprenticeship-type programs

In respect of the important phase of transition of young people to the world of work, a decision especially for an apprenticeship system allows for CVT which is in the first instance cumulative or preventive (see above), that is CVT then works as an enlargement of broadly based vocational knowledge towards higher degrees of vocational qualifications (eg. in Germany: „Meisterausbildung“ or „Technikerausbildung“). Moreover, an apprenticeship-based education system of initial vocational training normally has a high degree of standardisation and has a strong function of social stratification. Acquired and certified qualifications are independent of the specific demands of enterprises and they are offered on a labour market which is oriented towards vocations and professions, not towards ‚jobs‘.

This very specific character of a ‚vocation' is a characteristic and distinctive feature of those systems of vocational education which are dominated by apprenticeship systems (especially Germany, Austria and with restrictions Denmark and the Netherlands). CVT in apprenticeship-based systems may be offered by the economy (Germany) and by the government as well (Denmark), but it normally follows the rules of the market and not those of the social policy of the government. This has direct effects on the funding concepts which means that cumulative CVT in these countries is mostly financed by the enterprises and/or the individuals.

Besides this, the apprenticeship dominated systems have a very close relationship to the demands and conditions of the world of work. In order to prove this, we quote the résumé of Streeck, who outlined perspectives of the apprenticeship system for the nineties:

> „A very important lesson from the German system and , ... also from the Japanese system, is to recognise the extreme importance of learning in the work process and experimental knowledge. This is especially crucial when working with a technology such as microelectronics, which is undefined and where work and experimentation merge. Such technologies are defined by their application. Where products and manufacturing processes change very fast, workers must always improvise. In improvising they have to rely on experimental skills which must be emphasised in training and can only be acquired at the workplace." (Streeck 1992, p. 42)

This has several effects which will be outlined and analysed in Chapter 3 (e.g. positive influence on the degree of unemployment of disadvantaged people). Directly related to the subject of CVT, this orientation of apprenticeship systems allows the linking of broadly based vocational qualification to a job related measure of CVT. This acts as a very flexible and fast instrument to adapt qualification levels to the demands of the enterprises and (in general) of the whole employment system.

The role of government within such a structure of CVT is quite restricted in the sense of social policy. To be more precise, it is restricted in terms of labour market policy (increasing unemployment). Hence governmental support of CVT tends to be defensive (curative/compensative), whereas private and enterprise funded CVT tends to be offensive (cumulative/preventive).

2.5.1.2 Mainly school-based programs

In the context of such educational systems, which prefer dominantly (vocational) school based solutions, it seems to be quite clear that the connection to the conditions and the demands of the occupation system is less close. Because of the fact that vocational training, which is provided in schools is necessarily more theoretical, CVT becomes – in the view of the individuals and the enterprises – more important in order to adjust or compensate the deficits of practice experience caused by the (full-time) school dominated VET. CVT in such systems, therefore, very often has a rather strong compensative function and is for this reason much more important (especially for the enterprises, but also for the process of vocational transition) than in apprenticeship based VET systems. As Chapter 3 will show, such systems have greater problems especially with disadvantaged, unemployed people than those dominated by apprenticeship systems.

Hence, the governmental measures also very often show a strong concentration concerning the problematical group of disadvantaged people. On review of governmental activities, CVT then becomes a solely compensative or curative function. Many governments in Europe follow this strategy (see for example France, but also Ireland), although experience has since proved that the effects of such a defensive labour market policy are weak or even antithetical (see for example the analysis of Connell/McGinnity 1997 for the situation in Ireland; for similar but older results see Berton 1983).

2.5.1.3 Work-related program types (‚training on the job')

In education systems which are dominated by on-the-job training programs (for example the UK), normally the CVT measures which are organised and offered by enterprises play a very important role. In such systems, enterprises qualify their employees almost exactly for those skills, which are actually needed within the enterprise. Therefore training on the job programs have necessarily a very strong connection to the specific conditions not only of the world of work, but also the demands of the actual workplace of the employee. Therefore, these measures are necessarily dominated by a compensative character.

Normally systems of vocational education, which are mainly based on or dominated by on-the-job training programs, do not have such a broadly based concept of a lifelong ‚vocation' as is the case in education systems, which are dominated by apprenticeship-programs (especially in Germany and Austria). Workers, therefore, have not acquired a broadly based qualification which is comparable to the German comprehension of a ‚vocation' with a very high degree of standardisation. Skills acquired within a CVT program in the context of ‚on-the-job training' models are normally work based but they are at the same time related to the concrete conditions of the workplace and explicitly do not cater for the needs of the whole labour market.

In such training on the job based program types, social policy (or to put this in a more general manner) processes of governmental intervention and steering very often become very important especially for the disadvantaged on the labour market because enterprises naturally prefer training their employees on the job and not (for example) unemployed people. CVT in such systems normally is regulated by market processes and the tasks of governments are concentrated on supporting those who do not get any support from the economy.

One major advantage of training on the job programs is their high degree of flexibility. But on the other hand, very often these offers of CVT are characterised by an enormous degree of intransparency. Due to the fact that ‚free market processes' dominate, governments only have few chances of improving the degree of transparency. This structural disadvantage is intensified by the fact that we find in Member States like the UK such a lot of different measures, that it is almost impossible to achieve true transparency either for experts or for clients.

Nevertheless one way to solve this dilemma may be the path followed by the British model: VET and CVT policy in UK is mainly regulated by the rules of the market (or the needs of the enterprises). At the same time, the United Kingdom tries to give the measures of vocational qualification a certain structure and standardisation by creating modules (see van Cleve/Kell 1996). Such modules are able to improve the degree of decentralisation, flexibility and also the capability to adapt qualification demands to the actual conditions of the world of work (see Reuling 1996). On the other hand, a negative effect of this concept is that the quality aspect of the CVT measures is very difficult to control and the solution of modularisation only works if there is a higher framework which organises the variety of different modules. In UK the education policy has tried to solve this problem by establishing the so-called system of NCVQ (National Council for Vocational Qualifications).

Nevertheless, the lack of a general curriculum which is, for example, observed by the state remains a very serious problem for training systems which do not really differentiate between broadly based initial vocational training and CVT. This also has major effects on the certification of the above-mentioned modularisation of vocational qualifications. Taking the British example again, the increasing number of different certifications now seems to be „assuming inflationary proportions" (Reuling 1996, p. 52). This means that it is nearly impossible to control the contents and (above all) the quality of the measures. One important aim which was followed in the United Kingdom by establishing the NCVQ System was to create so-called „competency statements", which should make acquired vocational skills comparable. A similar tendency can be observed in France and in most of the Member States in the southern part of Europe. Although these measures of reform are rather different and heterogeneous (concerning their details and even their strategy), these Member States also have during the last decade tried to make vocational skills comparable by creating certifications (see Puvogel 1996, p. 87).

Similar to this, the increasing initiatives of certifying acquired vocational skills in the context of the introduction of alternating models of vocational training are another effect of this crucial problem. This problem is that systems of vocational education and training, which are not dominated by highly standardised and institutionalised systems of initial training (like the German apprenticeship system), are forced to strengthen the attractivity of the acquisition of partial or modularised skills by giving them a higher degree of transparency. This higher degree of transparency by certification is attractive for the enterprises because they have more exact information about the qualifications offered, and it is attractive for the individuals too because they are better able to plan their occupational mobility and career.

And on the level of the European discussion, the efforts towards modularisation and at the same time towards new forms of accreditation and certification of qualifications prove that this is regarded as an important instrument, which is able to give especially disadvantaged individuals on the labour markets a first or second chance to acquire any kind of basic vocational qualification. The measure is oriented towards those individuals who never had a chance to get a „traditional paper qualification" (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 32) and who would, without such a model, probably have never got one (p. 38). This concerns the field of CVT in so far directly as the strategy of „accreditation of prior learning' and post-qualification is closely connected with an enlargement of the importance of CVT and of work experienced based forms of learning (see Sellin 1996, p. 9).

Finally, strategies of modularisation linked up with stronger efforts towards certification are accompanied in many cases by a more or less high degree of deregulation and decentralisation. For example the analysis of the Guildford Educational Service Ltd. confirms this strong tendency referring to recent structural reforms of the Member States Ireland, France, Portugal, Sweden, and Italy (Guildford 1996, p. 45). The variation of different forms of decentralisation is very widespread (freeing regional technical colleges from the control of the Vocational Education Committees and the decentralisation of school and college management [Ireland]; the autonomy of regions concerning training and apprenticeship matters [France], setting up local education systems in order to create a network of local actors involved in training and education [Italy] etc.) (see Guildford 1996, p. 45).

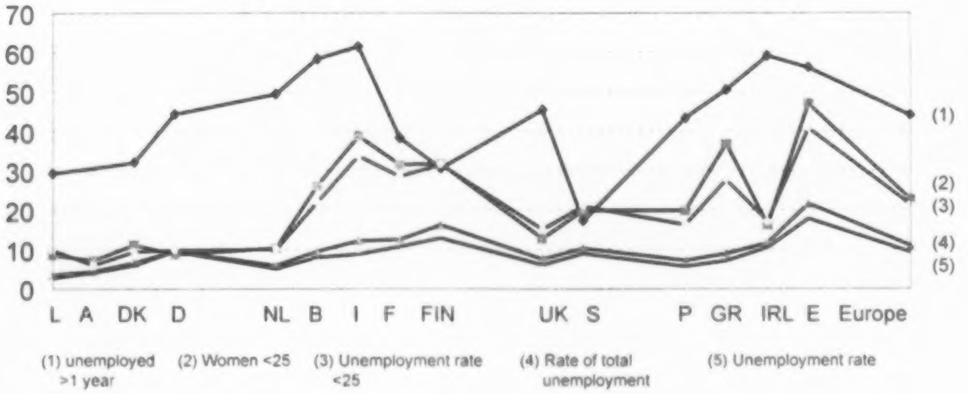
From this point of view, the European debate outlined in the White Paper 1996 which is searching for new pathways by following ideas like certification and accreditation of acquired qualifications or vocational skills in an informal institutionalised context, is embedded in the context of a more general strategy. The authors remember in this context of discussion the central issues of flexibilisation by modularisation, certification, new accreditation systems, deregulation etc. All these development strategies seem to be (with restrictions) appropriate instruments, which make access to vocational education easier by opening new entrances for all individuals and especially for the disadvantaged (e.g. unemployed, unqualified etc.).

2.5.2 Education systems with more than 50% of young people in general education on the secondary level

If it holds true that a close link between the process of vocational education and training and the concrete conditions of the labour market are an advantage of economic competition for the enterprises and for the learning individuals as well, the lack of job related vocational qualification is greater in those Member States stronger which have more than 50% of young students in institutions of general education on the secondary level. Especially the first phase of transition to working life seems to be in that case the most crucial problem because these school-leavers have necessarily very strong deficits concerning practical and job related skills. According to the OECD Analysis, in the EU today four of the 15 Member States (Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Spain) are in the latter category (see figure 8).

For the role of CVT this means that CVT in this situation normally must take on a strong curative or compensative function because in this second phase of transition the individuals have to learn what they missed in their education at school. In these cases, probably the adjustment between the demands of the labour market and the available vocational qualifications of school leavers is much bigger than in the above types of systems of vocational education. Indeed, there is a strong correlation concerning this structural aspect. As figure 9 shows, the last group of those Member States with more than 50 % of students in schools of general education, have indeed the strongest problems concerning the group of disadvantaged people on the labour market (this refers especially to the problem of youth unemployment). Vice versa, this problem of the disadvantaged is far less serious in the case of apprenticeship-type dominated Member States.

Figure 9:



Age and sex dependent unemployment by school system type (1997)

Proportion of upper secondary enrolements

datas from: Eurostat News Release Nr. 35/97;

But although the correlation of countries which are dominated by general education systems and a low economic development (Greece, Portugal and Spain) seems to be obvious, this theory has to be qualified. First, from the point of view of pedagogy, we have to reflect that such an approach „disregards the effect of social structure on individual effort and opportunity, concentrates on the exchange value of education rather than on its intrinsic value, and sees the education system as a labour force service rather than as a producer and modifier of values, cultural and social as well as economic" (Jonathan 1994, p. 6700).

And secondly, the quoted author Jonathan underlines, that „the available empirical evidence thus suggests that the macro-economic arguments for vocational education and training during the period of compulsory education, as a prerequisite for national economic health, are far from compelling" although such arguments have during the nineties been formulated „by politicians, policy makers and the media, with cross-cultural comparisons offered to lend them support". He concludes that this would be a highly selective strategy: „Much is made of those European nations with good performance and some vocational content within schools; little is made of the general education programs characteristic of schooling in Japan." (Jonathan 1994, p. 6700)

In addition to this, we have to mention that the programs of the so-called ‚vocationalism' (related to schools of general education on secondary level) have been criticised because these efforts did not have very much effect. In the context of this debate, Skilbeck (1994) stresses the following in connection with this vocationalism:

> „In all these movements, either implicit or explicit criticisms are made of school curricula on the grounds that their distinctive features and relationships to changing socio-economic needs to show a remarkable stability and resistance to fundamental change. ... In secondary schools, for example, neither new subject matter nor orientations such as environmental and health education, new information technology, work experience, nor new pedagogies based

> on self-managed learning, project methods, and the breakdown of the aged-based class group have been successful in dislodging the traditional subjects or academic disciplines, their associated instructional methods, and the ways they are examined. ... Economic pressure on the curriculum at all levels has grown markedly in countries experiencing faltering growth or decline. It is most visible in the demand for curricula that better equip students for the labour market, a paradox in face of the disappearing youth labour market especially in industrialised countries." (p. 5519)

The authors think that they should not ignore these arguments which are also pedagogical and economic. But this criticism explicitly refers to the debate of ‚vocationalism' within schools of general education. Therefore the authors state and repeat first, that we are confronted with strong consequences concerning the situation within the labour market in countries dominated by systems of general education: With the increasing number of unemployed it seems almost inevitable that governmental intervention is needed in the form of labour market programs and especially also within the field of CVT. This is a situation which has at the same time strong effects on the costs and financing of CVT, which must be carried out by the government for these groups. On the other hand and (at least) seen from the perspective of the enterprises, this lack of job-related qualifications may, in spite of the arguments of Jonathan, mean a more or less strong competitive disadvantage because they have to ‚repair' the negative effects of an education process, which does not meet the interests and needs of the world of work.

And secondly, the authors may state that besides socio-cultural and historical reasons such a decision for the dominance of general education is another expression of the fact that the field of vocational education in these countries was not very well developed. This is very likely a consequence of the domination of the system of general education. Though the authors Brandsma/Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 59) conclude in their analysis that these countries have for a few of years been rethinking the whole structure of their education systems and trying to improve or even to reorganise their VET-system by promoting the role and importance of the field of vocational education (including the field of CVT):

> „This rather comprehensive concept not only includes continuing vocational training but also initial vocational training... This situation applies in particular to countries in which there were only tentative moves towards vocational training and in which the education system was ruled and is still dominated by general and academic education. This dominance is also reflected in parents' and pupils' preferences. This is particularly marked in Greece, Spain, Portugal and France. Restructuring intentions and activities not only have the goal of increasing the quality and participation in initial and continuing vocational training but also aim to facilitate the transition from school to working life. Hence, they also make a contribution to labour market policy. Moreover, the new structures are to lay the foundations for lifelong learning, as part of daily work." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 59)

As we see, Brandsma et al. mention exactly those Member States which are reforming their education system towards a more vocational approach, which are dominated by structures with more than 50% of students in general education institutions (GR, E, IRL, P). Some reasons for the ongoing preference of the dominance of general education in spite of its negative effects on the labour markets may be, (1), that general education has higher social prestige than vocational education (see for example France), (2), that the establishment of schools of general education is less expensive than the establishment of full-time vocational schools and (3), that the individuals believe, that social advancement would be easier with a formal qualification attained in a school of general education. These are some reasons why governmental reforms are so gradual and why it is so difficult to make people grasp the advantages of vocational education in comparison to the supposed advantages of general education schools.

3. SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF CVT IN EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES: A STRUCTURAL COMPARISON OF CVT SYSTEMS

3.1 Methodological aspects

3.1.1 The database and the problem of the lack of data

Analysing the situation and prospects of CVT in Europe presupposes permanent monitoring and the collection of relevant and comparable data at national level in all Member States. Even today we do not have a comprehensive CVT survey which gives insight into the most important aspects of this subject on the European level. Although most of the Member States have made more or less strong efforts concerning such data investigations on a national level (for example in Germany beginning in the early seventies with an approach to analyse the costs of CVT; see: Münk/Lipsmeier 1997, p. 53 ff.), such data sets are normally incomplete even on the national level because of the very diversified structures of CVT systems). On the other hand, a small country like Luxemburg has never undertaken such a comprehensive data investigation and in less developed economies like Greece, it is almost impossible to carry out such a comprehensive national survey which covers all forms, bodies involved in and variants of CVT.

On the European level, there have been some statistical attempts, and the latest analysis dates back to 1992 (Task Force Human Resources: Synoptical Tables 1992). The sub-heading already indicates that these are the only data currently available data and that present there are no plans to extrapolate the data in a new edition. A more recent attempt are the evaluations based on the FORCE program. But although some of the national surveys are rather detailed in respect of their monitoring of specific data sets (compare for example the German contribution: Alt/Sauter/Tillmann 1993), we only have eight such national studies which have been published. The summary analysis of the national contributions by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995) is orientated towards structures, but does not offer detailed statistical information.

Another important piece of research work concerning the situation of CVT in Europe is a result of the demand for such an analysis in the context of FORCE and LEONARDO. It was produced by the „Institut national pour le développement de la formation professionelle continue“ in Luxembourg (INFPC). This analysis, which was undertaken in the context of FORCE by Ant, Kintzelé, van Haecht and Walther is a rather extensive and structured synopsis but it mainly focuses on structures without presenting detailed data for all Member States. In addition to this, the new Member States Finland, Sweden and Austria are not taken into consideration, because this study was prepared within the framework of the FORCE program.

A very new and for our contribution most important analysis is a survey of in-company CVT in 50,000 enterprises throughout Europe. But reasons of data protection and (as the authors suspect) for political reasons it was only possible to get a four-page résumé of this study which will be published in 1997 (EUROSTAT CVT-Survey 1994). All the above-mentioned studies are part of the FORCE program which means that the three new Member States are not mentioned.

In addition to this, some national surveys which make up the database of this European CVT survey (restricted to enterprises), have been published and describe in a very detailed manner the national situation (see for example the German study of Schmidt 1996). Detailed statistical research studies also reveal the enormous problems in such a project, as the German analysis states:

> „The survey has shown that almost four out of ten enterprises were not prepared or in a position to classify their continuing training hours - despite the relatively rough categories - to the above-mentioned specialised areas... These figures confirm that it is very difficult to define and demarcate specialised areas in such a manner that no major overlappings will occur which make it unnecessarily difficult for the enterprise to undertake the classification. Furthermore, the survey has also shown that the statistical recording of continuing training hours is still not the rule in many enterprises.“ (Schmidt 1996, S. 99)

The latest publication concerning the European status quo of CVT is the result of the recommendation of the European Council (30.6.1993) concerning „access to continuing vocational training". In April 1997 the European Commission published a report about the access to CVT within the European Union. This report includes first a structured overview about the CVT situation in all 15 Member States (without empirical data, but nevertheless with a description of many details of the diverse national CVT systems), second the report of the ETUC on this subject, third a summary of the above-mentioned CVT survey, which has not yet been published, and fourth conclusions and new guidelines of the European Commission concerning the status quo and the further development of CVT in Europe.

And finally the authors refer to a synoptical study of the European Commission (European Commission [Tableau de bord] 1996), which refers to the European employment policies and makes available many synoptical reviews. Among these, there are also some concerning the European status quo of the structure of the CVT systems.

Other less specific data on the problem of CVT are available from the research work of UNESCO (World Education Report 1995) and – with a stronger reference to VET and CVT – of the OECD (e. g.: Education at a glance [1996] or Lifelong learning for all [1996]). Especially concerning two of the new Member States (Austria and Finland) the OECD has recently published research results about their education systems (OECD Reviews Austria and Finland). The main problem of these OECD studies is that this world wide organisation does not analyse all European Member States. This means that lots of data are missing and it cannot be guaranteed that thee data from the OECD can in fact be compared with the data of the EU or the Member States.

3.1.2 The problem of appropriate indicators

If there are lots of detailed data missing, the analyses of the situation of CVT within the European Member States must be orientated towards a primarily structural approach. But even for such a structural approach it is necessary to define indicators. Without discussing or even reflecting on the problems of establishing and defining such indicators, the authors just follow the proposition of the OECD which defines different indicators for the analysis of an education system. These are:

- cost, expenditure and finance;
- duration of measures;
- types of providers;
- volume of participation;
- learner appraisal and the recognition of skills and competencies.

This canon may be complemented by the structure and degree of legal foundations and by the different forms of CVT courses in the European Member States.

These indicators formulate the program of research but at the same time they also illustrate the difficulties: many of these indicators cannot be evaluated because of the lack of data or because of the fact that existing data are not comparable. The authors hope that the CVT survey will mitigate some of these problems at least concerning the situation within European enterprises.

3.2 Framework and main structures of CVT systems

First of all, it must be stressed that the socio-economic situation within the Member States is one of the strongest influential factors concerning the degree of social welfare within a nation. Although education and especially VET and CVT surely have very positive effects on the development of social welfare, it must be pointed out that education in general is only one of many variables which influence the socio-economic power and the capability to cope with the challenges of economic competition within a global economy. In other words, there are some „internal" factors of education systems and VET and CVT systems as well which can (and should) be improved in order to increase the economic and social welfare and the degree of democratisation of a nation. But at the same time there are lots of „external" factors which affect questions and problems of education, VET and CVT, but which are situated outside the world of education and which, therefore, can hardly be answered or solved by means of education (see for example: Lipsmeier 1996).

For example the differences between the GDP of European Member States and also the social and economic welfare in Europe are primarily the result of structural disparities. It is not by mere chance that those Member States which are situated on the periphery of Europe have the most serious economic problems (Greece, Italy, Spain, Ireland etc.) and that – within the concerned Member States – the peripheral regions of these Member States are less developed than the economic centres (northern Italy versus southern Italy, western Germany versus eastern Germany and so on). Education, VET and CVT can try to improve the situation but these fields of policy alone are not capable of turning around regional disparities of this kind.

Also the increase in the gross national product cannot be explained exclusively by improving the education system. Likewise the degree of economic competition of a nation or a enterprise is not an effect of VET or CVT alone. Throughout Europe the increasing poverty of the state has major effects on chances of improving education systems. But the status quo of education systems is not the sole reason for the status quo of the economies, nor the sole instrument for improving this situation.

And finally the most serious problem of European economies, the high level of unemployment (seen from a structural and not from an individual point of view), is not exclusively a question of education. Hence, it cannot be solved by means of education alone. In order to prove this, the authors would like to point out that the policy of the European Commission since the beginning of the eighties has put a central focus on this problem (by economic and social, but also by vocational programs, by offering different programs of financial assistance for example within the framework of the ESF), without having reached the objective of stopping or even reducing the degree of unemployment. Sellin stresses that during the late seventies more than 80% of ESF funds were spent on support for the unemployed (see Sellin 1996, p. 2). He comments that according to this, „the main intervention in vocational training mainly for social and labour market policy reasons must be deemed to have failed" (Sellin 1996, p. 8).

To put it in a nutshell, when analysing the objectives and functions of VET and CVT, it must be pointed out that many of the central problems of European education policy are „on closer examination – externally triggered problems: problems of the labour market, the economic structure, the scarce (or even no longer available) public funds, the increasingly fierce international competition“ (Münk 1997; see also Lipsmeier 1996).

An analysis of structures, functions and objectives of CVT is masking the risk that the focus on questions of general education, VET and CVT leads to analysis becoming one-sided and monocausal and ignoring the fact that social and economic systems and social action as well is a complex and multicausal phenomenon requiring integrated analysis. Bearing this in mind, it was our task to concentrate on the effects and objectives of CVT. Therefore with these general reservations in mind, we present the following general theories CVT in the economic and educational systems within Europe.

These theories are, amongst other things, centrally based on the structural differentiation between education systems with more than 50% students in the field of vocational education on the one hand and with more than 50% of students in the field of general education on the other (see Chapter 2). It seems obvious that in the latter category CVT takes on existential importance because CVT has above all to compensate for the lack of work-related qualifications and skills. This comprises first line technical vocational qualifications (skills), but general key qualifications (or „core qualifications“) are probably affected too. Although it is almost impossible to evaluate the degree of such core qualifications exactly in a mathematically sense, the authors think that this theory is nevertheless true – at least as far it concerns the general needs of the world of work.

3.2.1 Relationship and connection between systems of initial training and CVT

Following on from the above-mentioned reflections, it is quite clear that the situation and the effects of the first phase of vocational education are very closely linked to the importance and the function of the succeeding CVT. If within any education system a well structured and developed system of initial vocational training does not exist, it seems to be quite clear that in such a constellation a differentiation between the two sub-systems of initial VET and CVT within the education system does not make very much sense. Very often in such cases, measures of CVT embrace all forms of vocational training. This general tendency also was stated by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch:

> „In ... countries in which general education is more dominant and/or relatively few young people are admitted to initial training, like Portugal and Greece, initial vocational training of adults is seen as part of the continuing vocational training system." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 13)

And in addition to this, there are several Member States (Denmark, France, United Kingdom), which subsume special forms of their initial vocational training or of their occupational retraining especially for young people to the field of CVT (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 13).

More often it is the case that a VET system does not exist at all. Nowadays, we find that Member States have reformed their educational systems and that they have tried, within the context of those reforms, to place greater emphasis on extending measures concerning vocational education. Very often such Member States have no socio-economically based, culturally and historically routed tradition concerning VET. Consequently, this means that in many cases lots of problems emerge when it comes to implementing the structural reforms of their VET and CVT systems.

Concerning current developments in European discussions of the reform approaches of VET and CVT systems, Brandsma, Kessler and Münch also underline in their analysis that at present all Member States are thinking about strategies to change the structure of their national systems of VET and CVT. The authors confirm that especially those Member States are concerned,

> „in which so far there have only been tentative steps towards vocational training and in which the education system was characterised and is still dominated by general and academic education... This situation is particularly marked in Greece, Spain, Portugal and France." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 59 f.)

Most of these general reforms aim to improve the quality and success of VET and CVT on the one hand. On the other hand they are characterised by the intention of making a contribution to national labour market policy, of facilitating the transition to the world of work and of promoting the idea of lifelong learning.

Especially the stress on the aspect of lifelong learning, which is to be found almost throughout Europe leads to the connection between VET and CVT becoming closer and closer and that – even more – the dividing line between systems of VET and CVT becoming increasingly blurred (e.g. Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom). This trend is also stated by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch who observe in this context:

> „A second element in the restructuring strategy, which is however very closely linked to the above one, are the growing links between and merging of initial and continuing vocational training. Examples of this can be found in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and in Belgium. The sharp dividing line between initial and continuing vocational training is gradually disappearing which brings with it growing use of vocational training institutes." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 60)

In contrast to the above-mentioned situation we also find Member States with a rather strongly defined dividing line between initial vocational training and CVT. This dividing line dominates the structure especially of those education systems which place considerable emphasis on initial vocational training (e.g. Austria, Germany, Denmark, Luxembourg). For example in

Germany, where CVT exclusively takes place after initial vocational training and after the transition to the labour market, this dividing line is extremely strict. Nevertheless in Germany, too, demands have been made for a few years by educational scientists who call for stronger and closer links between VET and CVT in order to promote lifelong learning and to make vocational training more flexible to the demands of the occupation system (see Lipsmeier 1977, Münk/Lipsmeier 1997, see similarly: Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 13).

If there is no initial vocational education (that means if only a very small percentage of young people get the chance to obtain a broadly based vocational qualification), or if there are only first attempts to build up a well structured system of vocational education (which is the reality in most of the southern Member States), CVT remains the only way to improve and adapt vocational qualifications to the needs of the world of work. Therefore CVT becomes a very important (curative or compensative) function in general education school-based solutions (to a lesser degree this also holds true even for those education systems which are dominated by vocational schools on the secondary level, because vocational learning in these schools is mostly theoretically oriented). And within mainly work based systems of training on the job, CVT threatens to assume a mainly compensative function because the enterprises mostly offer measures which are oriented towards a short-term update qualification concerning those skills which are actually needed at the workplace.

If it is true on the one hand that during the phase of transition and during the whole working life as well the postulation of lifelong learning is a central focus and that on the other hand vocational learning and hence also CVT must be closely linked to the needs of the labour market, then the authors have to agree with the decision of the European Commission to strengthen alternance or apprenticeship systems (see European Commission [White Paper] 1996).

3.2.2 Linkages between social welfare/economic power and the CVT system?

Many of those Member States characterised by education systems which are dominated by general education (more than 50 %) are at the same time those countries which have very strong economic problems and a lower degree of social welfare (especially Greece, Spain, Portugal and the southern part of Italy).

This need not necessarily affect the VET and CVT system but we think nevertheless that this field of social action within a society exerts a (more or less, but surely up to different degrees) strong influence on economic status, the rate of unemployment and the social welfare of a nation. One indicator for this may be, that in many cases, the degree of governmental intervention in terms of social policy (that means financial aid or support) is rather high in such Member States (compare table 6).

Because of their poor economic situation at the time, most of these Member States receive not only public funds, but also very often rather high funds from the European Union (ESF) (e.g. the eastern part of Germany, the southern part of Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland). The most important reason behind the fund transfer was the number one goal of the Structural Fund of the EU (ESF: Promotion and structural adaptation of regions with a lack of development). In most of the Member States, this amount was much higher than for example the costs of ESF-goal number 3 (long-term unemployment). For example in Germany (eastern part) the amount for goal number one was ECU 13,640 hereas the amount for long-term unemployment was ECU 1,942. During the years 1994 to 1999 the distribution of the structural funds of the EU (ESF) was as follows:

Table 9:

Money spent from the structural funds of the EU 1994-1999 (in million ECU)

S	32810	**F**	12750	**FIN**	1704
I	20679	**UK**	10265	**A**	1623
G	20586	**IRL**	6004	**SW**	1420
P	15396	**NL**	2084	**DK**	767
GR	15066	**B**	1859	**L**	89

Source: Eurostat [Europe in Figures] 1995, p. 66 f.

Because of the extreme polarisation between the eastern and western parts, the German situation is somewhat misleading. The status of economic development may be seen from the funds spent by the European „Cohesion Fund". Although this fund is exclusively concerned with the promotion of ecology and trans-European networks, it illustrates the economic power of the Member States better because only those Member States receive money which have a per capita GNP of less than 90% percent of all Member States. Between 1993 and 1999 only Spain (with 52%-58% of the whole fund), Greece (with 16%-20% of the whole fund), Portugal (with 16%-20% of the whole fund) and Ireland (with 7%-10% of the whole fund) received money from this cohesion fund (see Eurostat [Europe in Figures] 1995, p. 70).

A similar result is shown by a purely economic analysis. The gross domestic product per capital throughout Europe (table 10) illustrates that in 1993 the Member States Portugal (ECU 7,324), Greece (ECU 7,406), Spain (ECU 10,434), Ireland (ECU 11,335), United Kingdom (ECU 13,835), Italy (ECU 14,586) and Finland (ECU 14,110) had a smaller GDP than the European average GDP (15,944). Although most of these Member States have had a disproportionate degree of GDP increase during the last 15 years, it is obvious that especially the Member States on the European periphery have the most serious economic problems. In some countries (especially in Italy and Finland, but on a higher level also in Germany) this is a result of very strong regional disparities, but generally these rates illustrate the different levels of economic development in Europe very clearly.

Table 10:

Gross domestic product per person in IPP (Index of purchasing power) and ECU (1993)

	IPP				ECU
GR	9999			P	7324
P	10934			GR	7406
S	12330			S	10434
IRL	12833			IRL	11335
FIN	14387			UK	13835
UK	15690			FIN	14110
SW	15695			I	14586
	15848	**European mean**			15944
I	16228			NL	17268
NL	16308			B	17849
G	17147			SW	18256
F	17434			F	18640
A	17718			A	19453
DK	17815			G	20097
B	17956			DK	22254
L	25422			L	26856
Japan	19099			**Japan**	29014

Source: Eurostat [Europe in Figures] 1995, p. 356

Related to the above-mentioned differentiation (see Chapter 2) between those systems which have more than 50% of students in general education and those which have more than 50% in vocational education, the four Member States with the lowest level of GDP (Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland) are exactly those Member States which have more than 50% of students in general education on the secondary level. And vice versa those Member States with a domination of vocational education on the secondary level find themselves amongst the countries with a higher GDP. And in addition – but with more restrictions (Luxembourg, Belgium) and referring only to the data of GDP expressed in ECU – the above table shows that the apprenticeship dominated Member States belong to those countries which in terms of their economy belong to the leading group of European nations.

Naturally it is not possible to draw from these economic based facts the conclusion that mainly the structure and major importance of vocational training and CVT within an education system are exclusively responsible for economic success. Economic success always depends on a complex bundle of reasons. And the authors are sure that there are lots of further (and even more important) responsible factors which are able to explain this relationship. The Japanese example, which only has a system of vocational education of marginal importance, illustrates that such a theory would be too strong (see Georg 1992, p. 54 ff.). And besides it is obvious that an economically well developed nation is much better able to finance the enlargement and improvement of its education system and of its VET and CVT system as well. But nevertheless within Europe the fact of this relationship remains although it cannot be explained in a monocausal manner.

In respect of the education systems and especially the national situation of VET and CVT systems, it seems to be obvious that a certain number of Member States faced with strong economic problems are mainly situated on the European periphery (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland). At the same time, these Member States also suffer from the highest rates of unemployment and they also have a rather weakly developed system of vocational education (or at least they recently have started reform efforts). And their systems of VET and also of CVT are still in a process of reorganisation and enlargement. A lack of differentiation between VET and CVT is often not an intended effect of the structure of the system of vocational education, but the result of a system of VET and CVT which is still in the process of developing.

The authors do not state that VET and CVT is the only and most important instrument to mitigate the economic disparities and the resulting effects of social inequality but they do think that the enlargement of vocational training (CVT included) is one important instrument among others. And the enlargement and improvement of CVT especially in this context is even more important than the enlargement of VET because the economic effects of CVT can be achieved in the short term. Moreover, CVT is a qualification tool which makes enterprises very flexible.

3.2.3 Trends towards decentralisation and regionalisation

In nearly all policy areas and especially concerning the policies of VET and CVT we can observe very strong trends towards decentralisation and regionalisation. This trend concerns the dimension of the political and of the economical structure as well. One of the focal goals of decentralisation and regionalisation is catering for the needs of SMEs (see next Chapter). They normally act locally and are a decisive factor in regional development. International scientific research has since proved that within the process of so-called ‚systemic competition' there very often emerge „local clusters" or „regional agglomerations" which are interlinked as a network mostly of local SMEs. As has been demonstrated, for example, for the northern, highly industrialised part of Italy, SMEs which operate within the framework of such a network profit from very many different advantages of competition because of synergies and certain forms of cooperation (see Hurtienne/Messner 1994, S. 34 and more general: Porter 1990).

Related to the development of CVT, decentralisation and regionalisation does seek to adapt VET and CVT measures to the specific needs of the local economy. Very often this process of adaptation to local needs is (intentionally or unintentionally) connected to the emergence of a local network and infrastructure. Within such networks, the cooperation of the local players (public institutions, educational research institutions, institutions providing VET and CVT courses and naturally the SMEs) becomes much easier and therefore more efficient. The Commission states in its report that in some Member States even networks of educational institutions have since emerged which not only meet the local needs of vocational qualifications and skills (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 25), but which act at the same time as advisors, who counsel the local enterprises on the formulation of an appropriate entrepreneurial strategy for CVT development.

Normally such network structures based on the development of VET and CVT fit very well into the existing infrastructure of public measures, which try within the framework of their regional education and labour market policies to improve their economic situation. In respect of decentralisation, it is Germany which has strong preferences for strengthening this process of decentralisation and regionalisation. In other Member States with a stronger dominance of governmental steering of CVT (for example Greece and especially France) some tasks (like the analysis of educational or vocational needs) are shouldered and managed by regional public institutions, who cooperate and finance them together with the government or state.

3.2.4 Increasing awareness of the needs of SMEs

As the preceding chapter illustrates, the subject of decentral networks within regions is closely connected to the subject ‚SMEs', which profit most from this process. As an example for this, the authors quote a German project in Bavaria, which has tried to establish so-called ‚networks of learning' for SMEs in the sectors of metal and electronics. In order to reduce the CVT costs of the enterprises concerned, the Bavarian model places very strong emphasis on the chances of New Technologies and promotes in this context the ODL (Open Distance Learning; see for this subject Chapter 2.4).

Summing up European policies for SMEs the authors state that the SMEs have always been a focus of interest in European Member States and in the policy of the European Union as well. In the older synopsis which was published within the context of the FORCE Program (Commission [Synoptic Tables] 1992, p. 43 ff) it is noted that all of the 12 Member States have a more or less strong focus on the special needs of SMEs. But now, the latest document of the Commission (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 25) documents, that together with the overall tendency of decentralisation and regionalisation, SMEs are in all 15 Member States at the top of the political agenda.

One of the reasons for this increasing consideration of the special situation of SMEs is the fact that this policy of a return to regional structures is closely linked to labour market policy. The Commission states that within the context of the national policy for the labour markets in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, major efforts have been made to create public committees on a local level (composed of social partners and local government representatives) which combine measures of vocational rehabilitation and reintegration with courses of vocational training (CVT included) (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 25).

Portugal has also established a network of local advisors who aim to promote the industrial advancement of SMEs on the one hand and create training courses (VET and CVT) on the other. The same trend has been gaining ground in the UK since the eighties: the creation of the NCVQ was followed by the foundation of regional TECs and LECs, which had the task of implementing the guidelines of governmental policy. The social partners in Denmark and especially the trade unions have also during recent years established a model („SUM", „strategic development of the labour force"), which is based on collective agreements and which aims to create different models of common educational planning. And finally the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium has to be mentioned in this context because it has established a network for the development of VET and CVT, which handles all activities of the relevant institutions of vocational education and the enterprises together (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 25 f.).

3.2.5 The problem of accreditation of qualifications

The accreditation of qualifications also is one of the focal points of discussion and of development in nearly all European Member States. The Commission has launched with its White Paper from 1996 (Teaching and Learning) a political program, which outlines the importance of this rather new postulation within the policy of vocational education and CVT. One of the most important goals of this White Paper was to point out the aim of „building up employability“ (European Commission 1996, p. 7). One of the focal strategies to reach this goal was to make the European systems of educational and vocational training more flexible by implementing an European system of accreditation within the framework of an integrating „network, which cooperates, educates, trains and learns“ (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 33 f.):

> „This solution does not detract from the paper qualification but on the contrary helps to maintain its quality and aims to recognise partial skills on the basis of a reliable accreditation system. Those rejected by the formal system of education would be encouraged to cultivate the skills they have. This does not mean qualifications in the broadly based sense but skills based on specific fundamental or vocational know-how (knowledge of a language, a given level in maths, using a spreadsheet). ... Accreditation of this kind could, of course, lead to the recognition on a broader basis of the technical knowledge acquired in a firm, which is currently more often than not evaluated solely for the company's use. ... The most efficient training approaches are those which operate within a network.“

Although it is rather obvious that this proposal is designed first and foremost for the vocational qualification of unqualified or semi-qualified people, this concept was criticised mainly by those Member States which have an education system which is strongly based on so-called ‚paper qualifications‘ (which is based on formal qualifications). This strong criticism is formulated despite the fact that the White Paper explicitly states that this concept of accreditation does not exclude or threaten formal systems of VET and CVT:

> „An accreditation system of this kind, on a voluntary basis, widely available in Europe and involving universities, chambers of commerce and specific business sectors, would complement the formal qualifications systems and would in no way be a replacement.“ (European Commission [White Paper] 1996, p. 38)

Germany, which has one of the strongest orientations towards formal qualifications, nevertheless has not accepted this proposal, because the Germans fear that such a system would threaten the basic structure of the German Dual System, if the program of accreditation is not clearly restricted to unqualified and generally disadvantaged people on the labour market (see for this: Münk 1997).

But nevertheless facing the challenge of the process of global competition, the debate concerning the accreditation of qualifications has become a focal issue on the European level (see for the following remarks: European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 15 f.): Denmark has had since 1993 a committee for the accreditation of acquired qualifications (EVK) and also the Finnish systems allows certificates to be granted solely on the basis of vocational experience. This makes the acquisition of these certificates independent of the way and form in which these qualifications have been acquired. The Commission mentions for this Finnish example the establishment of an official diploma on a national level, which confirms the language competency of a person without taking into account, where and how this language has been learned.

What is better known and has been established for more than ten years is the British and the similar Scottish system of accreditation of qualifications which is based in the British system on the concept of the NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) and in the Scottish system on the so-called „SVQ“ (Scottish System of Vocational Qualification).

The consequences of this broadly based European trend towards the accreditation of qualifications is summed up in the report of the European Commission. It states that all Member States have to take up the challenge, to create specific instruments, who are able to make these new forms of ‚non paper qualifications' more popular (see European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 16 f.).

3.2.6 *The problem of certification of competencies*

The accreditation of qualifications is very closely linked to the problem of the certification of competencies. Because of this, many of the Member States have not only begun to introduce systems of accreditation, but they also have established different models of certification of competencies (see for the following: European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 19 f.).

UK has the strongest tradition and therefore has with its above mentioned NVQ and SVQ and also with its TECs and LECs a sound infrastructure to translate its strategies for the certification of competencies into action. The British TECs and LECs have for example recently started programs which are entitled „Gateways to Learning" in order to establish a network which combines the different institutions of vocational counselling. The initiators hope to improve the provision and demand of vocational guidance as well. The next step in UK will be taken this year. In 1997, the UK is trying to link all public institutions to a new institution which is called „Qualifications and Curriculum Authority".

In other Member States like Belgium and Luxembourg, institutions of VET and CVT and the trade unions are just beginning to establish institutional structures in order to offer individuals and enterprises professional counselling and evaluation of their needs in respect of vocational training and CVT.

Ireland has its „TEASTAS" system which is an institutional structure of certification, which is implemented on the national level. These certifications cover training courses on the secondary level (universities excluded) and CVT. And Denmark has also in 1995, within the context of the so-called ‚AMU" (vocational training of adults), established a system which permits the evaluation of vocational qualifications during long-term measures of vocational training.

France has chosen a different path. In December 1991 it formulated a law in order to make the evaluation of the CVT needs of the gainfully employed easier. This so-called „balance of competency" is an instrument which serves the enterprises and the individuals as well. After 5 years, the Commission described the success of this approach as follows:

> ‚Almost five years after its introduction, this service is becoming increasingly important within vocational training since it offers people in employment in particular an opportunity for them to have their level of knowledge and training assessed free of charge outside working hours." (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 20)

As the above examples document, the efforts concerning the accreditation of qualifications and the certification of competencies are as strong as they are young. The steps taken in the Member States are very different but they all follow the same principle: to develop instruments of measurement and evaluation of qualifications and competencies in order to define exactly the provision and the needs of the existing qualifications. And they all have a common aim: to improve the quality of vocational training and continuing vocational training and, above all, to enhance individual mobility within the EU Member States. Therefore this focal subject of ‚quality in CVT' will be analysed in the following chapter.

3.2.7 *Improving quality*

The efforts concerning the certification of CVT are closely connected with the goal of improving quality. In addition to this, the market of CVT providers and of the different forms of CVT is in most of the European Member States rather complex and diversified. Improving the quality of CVT therefore means improving the subjects and contents, improving the processes of knowledge transfer, improving the quality of the trainers and improving the organisational and institutional framework (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 66).

The accreditation of CVT providers and the screening of CVT providers, their organisational structure, the quality of their didactic concepts and of their trainers with exactly defined criteria is a focal measure to improve the quality of CVT. A second strategy for improving quality is the evaluation or screening of the educational outcomes, that means, the evaluation of the learning results of CVT courses.

In addition to this, we find in nearly all Member States procedures for the monitoring and control of at least those CVT courses which are provided by the public sector. Very often the public sectors or the trade unions also make accreditations to offer CVT for private providers of CVT. This means that only those providers may offer CVT courses who have received this accreditation.

Brandsma, Kessler and Münch note an increasing awareness of the importance of „Total Quality Management“ in the field of CVT (1995, p. 68). A Europe-wide approach to reaching this goal is the certification of CVT courses by implementing and using the international ISO-Standards.

The report of the European Commission concerning access to CVT mentions in this context several approaches by many Member States which are well on the way to completion. This report quotes examples from Germany, the UK, Ireland and Belgium which document that the Member States are more and more aware of the importance of quality in the field of CVT and that in addition to this the number of certified CVT institutions is growing. These efforts are very often accompanied by a growing trend towards the outsourcing the CVT courses (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 14 f.). This focal aspect of CVT will be analysed by the authors within the context of the subject „access to CVT“ (see Chapter 3.4).

Finally, Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 68 f.) outline two general European trends concerning the development of strategies in order to improve the quality of CVT. The first trend is:

> „people are endeavouring to achieve a certain degree of standardisation and comparability of diplomas and certificates which are awarded for the successful completion of initial vocational training and successful participation in continuing vocational training. This trend can be observed in particular in those Member States which have created a national qualification system and national qualification structures.“

The basic idea of this model is that a higher degree of homogeneity and standardisation of CVT allows for a higher degree of transparency for the employed (or unemployed) participants and for the enterprises, who send their employees to CVT courses as well. The second trend observed by Brandsma, Kessler and Münch (1995, p. 68 f.) concerns the process of European integration:

> „The second trend in the field of certification is the gradually growing interest of Member States in the European dimension of continuing training. The importance of certified qualifications, which can be compared with the national certificates of other Member States or a European standard, is stressed in several national reports as is the need for recognition everywhere in the European Union of qualifications obtained by people in its Member States.“ (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 68 f.)

On the other hand it must be stressed that these efforts up to now had had little success despite the general goodwill as Brandsma et al. underline. t least the first approaches have been implemented and they peg out the future path for measures to improve the quality of CVT.

3.3 The legal framework

The legal framework of CVT is a decisive aspect for the analysis of each CVT system because this framework defines and determines the margins and (at the same time) the responsibilities of CVT activities. This definition takes place on three levels: the first level is the degree of regulation by law of the whole national CVT system (is there, for example, a national law that structures the field of CVT?); the second level refers to the organisational aspect, that means the distribution of responsibilities and competencies concerning the policy of CVT in general (who may decide and to do what and who finances CVT?); the third level refers to the individuals (do they, for example, have a right to access CVT courses or not?).

3.3.1 The degree of regulation of CVT by law

The most important characteristic of the legal structures of CVT is the fact that we do not have one single Member State which governs and controls the whole field of CVT by means of one single and special body of law. But this does not mean that the European Member States do not have any laws which refer to CVT. We find a widespread conglomerate of laws and institutional regulations from different public institutions and bodies which define special parts of the whole field of CVT according to their special focus of interest. This frequently concerns for example labour market policies as far as CVT is defined as an instrument to improve the situation of the unemployed or low qualified employees or it concerns the regulation of CVT designed courses which take place at vocational schools. This highly diversified situation of a conglomerate with legal foundations for CVT is also to be found in the Netherlands, in Belgium, in Denmark, in Luxembourg and in Germany (see Brandsma, Kessler, Münch 1995, p. 24).

Give this strong diversification which often leads to a high degree of intransparency, some Member States are trying to summarise their legal foundations within a single legal framework or at least to arrange the different existent laws on CVT within the framework of a collection of laws. Efforts of this kind have been made particularly during the last five years in Denmark and Luxembourg.

A second trend in the policy for a legal foundation for CVT is the attempt to improve the quality and the scale of CVT provision. This strategy is for example followed by Denmark which updated in 1993 a law from 1960 in order to cater for the continuing vocational training of the unemployed. At the same time, this so-called „AMU" system affects a reform of the whole Danish labour market policy.

The enlargement of improvements to the CVT systems but also the attempt to make the CVT system more transparent by reforming existing laws or by creating new ones are also the main reasons for the legal adaptations of the framework of CVT in Belgium, France, Spain and Greece. In Spain, the government even introduced in 1993 a special law aiming explicitly to promote vocational training and, more particularly, to reintegrate disadvantaged people into the world of work (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 24). In Greece, which has a rather weakly developed system of CVT, a committee was set up in 1989 under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Labour. The most important task of this committee, which is made up of representatives of the social partners, is to develop proposals for the provision of CVT courses on a national and regional level. A similar construction with very similar goals (improving quality, increasing transparency) has been introduced in Portugal, which adopted in 1991 and 1992 the relevant legal provisions (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 25).

In contrast to these developments, the UK has consistently opened up its provision of CVT to the free market. This means that the local TECs (Training and Enterprise Councils), which are independent of any public institution, try first and foremost to meet the specific needs of enterprises.

This example of the UK illustrates a further trend in the situation and development of CVT in the European Member States: Whereas the first common characteristic was the enormous degree of legal diversification with the related lack of transparency, the second trend concerns a situation in which there are Member States which have a CVT system which is regulated by law, and that there others (for example UK), who do not have such forms of legal regulation. The Member States therefore have a different degree of legal structure in the field of CVT. There are some Member States which have an extremely developed structure (for example Denmark, but also France) and there are some which have an extremely poorly developed structure (for example Greece, Italy and the UK). Brandsma et al. observe that „other Member

States... take up a position somewhere between these two extreme positions" (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 26).

It is not possible to offer one single explanation for this phenomenon of the different degree of legal structures within the different Member States. Nevertheless, one possible explanation could be the consequence of the main result of Chapter 2. Among those Member States which have an education system which has more than 50% of students on the secondary level in institutions of general education, we find at least Greece among those, who have at the same time a low developed degree of legal structure. Possibly this also holds true for Portugal and Spain (which also have a large proportion of students in institutions of general education), because these two countries have made considerable efforts to improve their system of VET and CVT during the last few years. And evidence to back this assumption could be the fact that the above-mentioned efforts to improve the quality of their CVT systems do not date back more than seven or eight years. Since that time, they have built up a legal structure which was not as highly developed as in the years before.

In general it seems clear that differences concerning the degree of structure of the CVT systems depend strongly on very specific and individual characteristics: the British system of CVT within the framework of the NVQ with its TECs and LECs is thus specialised and in so far a singular phenomenon. It cannot, therefore, be taken as a representative model. On the other hand, in Italy many details of its legal structure may be explained by the strong emphasis on regional aspects. Therefore, the authors think that instead of a typology which erases detail, a more appropriate analytical strategy would involve looking at these details.

Nevertheless, we would like to point out a third common trend in the European CVT system because it seems to be plausible and because it proves to a certain extent the theory of the authors in Chapter 2 (concerning the difference between the compensative and cumulative functions of CVT):

> „Generally speaking, it can be said that when we are talking about publicly funded continuing training, it is rather national or regional (statutory) provisions which apply. The continuing training courses organised by private suppliers, in particular in-company continuing training, is by contrast largely left to the market mechanisms." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 26)

3.3.2 Organisational aspects: Tasks and competencies of governments, institutions and the social partners

Since the late eighties OECD analyses have identified two main trends concerning the CVT policies of most of the OECD Member States: first the trend towards strengthening informal learning (which mostly involved reducing the size of formal, institution-based adult education) and „second the shift away from the role of governments in finance and provision towards an emphasis on the responsibility of the social partners and the individual adult learner" (OECD 1995, p. 145). This process has been called a policy towards „training markets" and implies that the matching of learning demands to the supply of opportunities „is left to forces other than those associated with government regulations" (OECD 1995, p. 141).

With a view to the degree of regulation of CVT within the Member States of Europe, it is obvious that the distribution of competencies and responsibilities is very different within the education systems of the European Member States. Very often the ministries of labour and work are responsible for the general framework of organisational and structural architecture of the CVT systems because CVT makes up an important part of the labour market policy. In addition to this, the ministries of schools and education are very often overly involved in the top level of governmental policy. On the medium and lower levels of the hierarchy we also find responsible institutions with a local or sectoral character.

Normally a focal role is assigned to the social partners who commit themselves on the level of national policy (for example in Spain, where agreements and plans for the development of CVT have been signed) and on the sectoral and regional level as well. Especially on this medium level of sectors and regions, the social partners have in nearly all Member States taken on very central and concrete tasks like for example the formulation of the contents and scale of the measures planned within the field of CVT. Brandsma et al. quote as examples for such a division of tasks the Member States Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy and UK (Brandsma, Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 27). The enterprises of these Member States are also involved in the process of educational planning. In concrete terms, this means that they define aims for matching the supply and demand for labour according to the different education levels.

There are two dominant trends in Europe: The first trend is the process of regionalisation (see the chapter above), which has in many Member States led to the transfer of competencies and responsibilities from the governmental level down to the local level. Examples for this important development are in the two parts of Belgium the „VDAB" (Flemish part) and the „FOREM" (Wallonian part) and in Spain, too, in many regions for example the Basque, Catalan regions and Valencia, Galicia and Andalusia have been given major competencies concerning CVT policy and implementation. Italy, which has a high degree of regionalisation, organises nearly 50 % of public CVT in a regional framework and even France, which has one of the highest degrees of centralisation within its education system, set up in 1982 a regional committee for VET, CVT and employment („COREF"). This plays an important role in implementing CVT courses (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 27 f.)

And the second very strong trend is the process of shifting competencies and responsibilities concerning VET and especially CVT to the private sector (see also Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 27). This political strategy is preceded and accompanied by a general policy of deregulation. Trends of this kind have been discussed for example and partially translated into action in Germany but the most consistent deregulation of the system of VET and CVT is to be found in the UK where the Thatcher Government already began in the early eighties to deregulate the whole British economy. In respect of vocational training, it was mainly the above-mentioned system of the „NCVQ" which provided the framework for this broadly based strategy.

This dominant trend towards greater commitment by private enterprises and the trade unions embedded within the process of deregulation is also confirmed by the report of the European Commission:

> „The national reports confirm that it is the task of enterprises to do justice to their responsibilities in terms of continuing vocational training vis à vis their workforce. They are the most important players who frequently take initiatives and guarantee the largest proportion of financing." (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 14 f.)

In general it can be stated that the degree of commitment and responsibility is decreasing in the public sector and increasing between the social partners. To demonstrate this strong trend in the Member States, the report of the European Commission quotes the following examples

- In The Netherlands, where in the context of a law concerning questions of instruction and vocational education (called „WEB", 1996), national bodies or committees have been set up which are composed of representatives of employers' organisations and the trade unions. These committees cooperate with training providers and try to define formal certified qualifications for all sectors of industry on the level of secondary vocational education. In addition to this, they try to improve the distribution of relevant information in order to achieve a higher degree of transparency.
- In Finland a three-party committee of government and social partners has been founded to consider, within the framework of a governmental action program of employment, ways to improve the situation and further develop vocational training.
- In Italy and Portugal the report also notes the increasing importance of the ‚social dialogue' on questions of VET and CVT.
- In Spain the role of the social partners is defined by an arrangement between the government and social partners and is translated into action by the integration of the social partners into a CVT foundation („FOREM").

- And finally, also in France and Germany we find a law which gives worker representatives (or the staff committee) the right to be informed about the most important guidelines concerning in-company CVT measures (see European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 12 f.).

In general, the report of the European Commission concludes that the concerted action concerning the planning and practical implementation of VET and CVT is shifting to the enterprise level. CVT, therefore, becomes more and more a subject which is treated and defined within the framework of collective agreements (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 13 f.). In Denmark more than 90 % of the objectives of the labour market are now regulated by such collective agreements. In Germany, too, the enterprises and trade unions have, in cooperation with the government, major responsibilities concerning the whole architecture and provision of CVT measures. And finally the same trend has been observed for the Member States the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland.

The above-mentioned trend towards stronger „concerted action" by the social partners refers at the same time to the task of developing educational planning. This concerns the contents, the measures and the evaluation of the needs of CVT as well. On the level of the enterprises, the report of the Commission pronounces that in France, Finland, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK such efforts are put into practice and almost all the enterprises have an important function to assume by defining and analysing the concepts of educational planning (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 13 f.).

The most important problem concerning the details of these approaches to educational planning is that the chances to construct and evaluate such models and concepts of educational planing is determined by the size of the enterprise: This is, in other words, another structural disadvantage which the SMEs in particular have to cope with. This is because they have neither the well educated trainers nor the financial funds to transfer such concepts of educational planning into action although their need for such analyses may be even stronger than in big enterprises.

3.3.3 Funding concepts of CVT

Given this high degree of diversification of the structures of European CVT systems, the models of financing are very different, too. In addition to this, very often the mode of financing within one Member State is not coherent, but characterised by several forms of funding according to the concrete needs of the system. This means that nearly all Member States have a mixed approach to financing the costs of CVT (see also Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 31).

In general, there are three different modes of financing of CVT to be taken into consideration:

- financing of CVT courses which are organised by or for enterprises;
- financing of CVT courses for disadvantaged target groups;
- financing of CVT courses by the individuals or by the participants and the enterprises as well.

Since the data sets are not complete and they are not comparable in every single case, Brandsma et al. tried to create a synopsis (see table 11), which gives a structured overview of the different types of financing for CVT throughout Europe. Since some details have changed since 1995, the authors have added some data and changed some information which had been modified since the publication of the study of Brandsma et al. in 1995. For these modifications please refer to the legend at the bottom of the table.

As already mentioned, this table confirms that most of the Member States have a mixed system of financing CVT. This means that the enterprises, the public sector and the individuals finance CVT courses as well.

Table 11:

Expenditure on CVT (EUR 12)

Member State	*Expenditures*	*sum salary/ wages (%)*	*employed people (%)*	*legal foundations concerning financing CVT*
B	553.59 MECU[1]	1.4[2]	10[3]	0.25 % of the sum of wages and salary; recent law for a compulsory settlement of enterprises for disadvantaged groups[17]
DEN	800.00 MECU[4]	–	10	All employees and enterprises have to pay a labour market delivery of 5% of the gross salary/gross wage
G	34250.00MECU[5]	5.0[2]	25-30[2]	collective agreements; release or sabbatical
F	18787.00MECU[5]	3.3[2]	33	1.5% of the sum of wages and salary (0.15% for SMEs with less than 10 employees)
GR	164.00 MECU[6]	0.7	4[7]	0.45% of the sum of wages and salary (since 1991)[16]
IRL	336.00 MECU[8]	1.8	42[9]	0.1% of the sum of wages and salary (in some sectors 0.25%):
I	5200.00MECU[10]	2.5[10]	3[10]	0.3% of the sum of wages and salary
L	53.00 MECU[11]	1.2	24	none
NL	1400.00MECU[12]	1.7[13]	32[13]	0.64%-3.20% of the sum of wages and salary in dependence from the collective agreement of the sector
P	189.00 MECU[13]	1.1[13]	6	5 % of the annual budget of the social security[16]
S	989.41 MECU[14]	–	7[14]	0.6% from the enterprises (mployers) and 0.1% from the employees (drawn from the budget of social security); since 1992[15]
UK	23224.00MECU[5]	–	48	none

1) estimation for 1991; 2) estimated rate of percent; 3) concerns 10% of labour force of the Flemish part of Belgium; a survey of 1986 states instead of this 25%-30% of the employees; 4)referring to expenditures of the public sector; the expenditures of the private sector have been 520 MECU; 5) data from 1992; 6) estimation for 1992; 7) estimation for 1991; 8) estimation for 1989; 9) referring to on- and off-the-job-CVT; 21% of all employees participate in off-the-job CVT courses; 10) estimated for 1991 (estimated percentage rate of the sum of wages and salaries; 11) data referring to 1993; 12) data referring to 1990; only referring to enterprises of the private sector; 13) data referring to 1990; 14) estimations referring to 1993; 15) data referring to 1987; 16) data from Ant/Kintzelé/Haecht/Walther 1996, p. 76; 17) data from European Commission (Report), 1997, p. 11 (source: FORCE-Bureau [Fiches FORCE])

Brandsma et al. 1995, p. 33

Financial resources from the public sector are very often spent by the ministries of labour or by institutions of the labour administration (for example in Germany, Greece and the Netherlands). The economically less developed countries (almost Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland) in particular and the regions (e.g. the southern part of Italy, the eastern part of Germany etc.) receive a very high degree of funding from the ESF.

The financing system of the UK places very strong emphasis on the corresponding obligation of enterprises, which is a very important source of funding to cover CVT costs. A certain degree of public control is possible (certifying and guaranteeing quality) and the public sector does grant some tax relief in order to mitigate the costs of enterprises.

The second model of financing is the establishment of financial funds which differ in terms of their structure. In some Member States for example France (since 1971), Italy (since 1993), Greece, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands the enterprises have had to bear the costs for this fund alone, whereas under the Danish „AMU" system of 1993 employees and employers have had to finance it too since 1997 (up to 1997 only the Danish enterprises had to pay for this fund; see Ant/Kintzelé/Haecht/Walther 1996, p. 75). The Spanish system is based on a national agreement concerning CVT which imposes payments on companies of 0.6 % and of 0.1 % on employees (drawn from the social security).

The social security budget is the most important source for financing CVT in Portugal. Based on a law from 1986, 5 % of this budget is transferred to an institution for employment and vocational education (IEFP) which is managed by the government and the social partners (see

Ant/Kintzelé/Haecht/Walther 1996, p. 76). This means, in other words, that in addition to the resources of the European ESF the Spanish public sector pays most of the costs of the Spanish CVT system inasmuch as the CVT courses are up to a certain standard.

In those Member States which finance CVT by means of the above-mentioned system of funds, we found differences concerning the percentage amount of the money spent by enterprises on this fund (e.g. France 1.5 %; Greece 0.45 %; Italy 0.3 %; Belgium 0.1 %). On the other hand, we find national differences in the fund system depending on their structure which may be oriented towards a national or sectoral level (e.g. Netherlands, Ireland). An example for this orientation towards a sectoral structure is the Irish „levy/grant system", which is administrated by the FAS (public authority for occupation and vocational education). In such models as the Irish one, the percentage amount of the costs for the CVT funds depends on the sector which each enterprise belongs to.

A second important problem is the funding of CVT for disadvantaged groups on the labour market. The methods of financing this are rather similar in all Member States. Ant et. al. sum up this general concept as follows:

> „A similar approach can be identified in the various Member States. This involves a redistribution of income by the state which is paid into an unemployment fund (or employment fund) or raised by means of taxes. The money is passed on to public institutions who are responsible for combating unemployment or for organising specific continuing training programs for unskilled young people and the unemployed." (Ant/Kintzelé/Haecht/Walther 1996, p. 77)

Examples of this model are to be found in particular in Belgium with a compulsory settlement for disadvantaged persons (see European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 11); France (0.3 % for reintegration of unskilled and unemployed people) and Luxembourg, although it is not clear in the case of the latter how these funds will be distributed between the action fields of VET and CVT (see Ant et al. 1996, p. 78).

It is almost impossible to obtain valid data about the individual angle. But in general the financial incentives which are normally offered are tax reductions, the shouldering of costs for travelling to CVT courses and so on (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 36). An exception is the UK which is pursuing a strategy of deregulation. This means concretely that the government has developed a more or less strong system of incentives to motivate the access for individuals to CVT (so called „Career Development Loans", „Training Accounts", and „Skills Choice" (see Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 36). The effect of these measures is that – following the rules of the free market – the responsibility of access to CVT is transferred to a large degree to the individual.

3.3.4 Individual right of access to CVT and educational leave

The individual right of access to CVT means „the right of each employee to attend a continuing training course which corresponds to his/her personal interests and which is not necessarily of direct benefit for his/her employer" (Ant/Kintzelé/Haecht/Walther 1996, p. 74). It is clear that in this context CVT includes courses which have no close connection with the qualifications required at the employee's workplace.

There are some Member States which guarantee a legal right to CVT and others (fewer) which are characterised by a ‚legal vacuum' concerning such a law. And a third group (especially the Netherlands and Louxemburg) is currently discussing this subject within the framework of the construction of a law concerning CVT (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 19).

The group with a ‚legal vacuum' includes for example the UK who transfers the decision concerning access to CVT exclusively to the enterprises. This is like the British strategy of general deregulation which implies the consistent withdrawal of government or public action from many fields of economic tasks.

A legal right of access to CVT is very often connected with the right to educational leave (which may be paid directly or indirectly by the employers or not). Such a right may be laid down in laws on the national level (France, Belgium [since 1985 duration: 160 or 240 paid hours], Finland, Sweden, Spain [duration: 150 hours, paid]) or on regional levels (Germany [duration: 5 days, paid]) or it may be fixed within collective agreements (Netherlands [duration: 1-3 days], Denmark [duration: up to 1 year, unpaid] and Italy [duration: 150 hours]) (see European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 19 and Ant et al. 1996, p. 172). Some of the Scandinavian nations (especially Denmark) not only have the concept of educational leave but also job rotation (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 19).

Other Member States like Luxembourg and the Netherlands are actually discussing the creation of a legal framework for the right to CVT within a CVT-oriented legal initiative. The fact that this question is being discussed shows that it implies many problems. Especially the experience in Belgium shows that the success and the degree of efficiency of educational leave is not always very high. In order to improve its law of 1985 Belgium has recently formulated a reform which reduces the duration of educational leave and defines stricter limits concerning the financing of its model (European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 19). In Germany, too, there is no consensus about the positive effects of the instrument of educational leave. Hence, six of the ‚Bundesländer' do not and ten have this right to educational leave.

In addition to this, the German experience proves that this instrument cannot work efficiently in respect of the goal of enlarging access to CVT because only 2 % or 3 % of German employees make use of this legal right. Given these experiences, the authors suppose that it is unlikely that educational leave could become a useful European strategy to improve the access to CVT.

3.4 Access and CVT participation

The postulation of maximum access to CVT was formulated in 1989 in the so-called „Community Charter of fundamental social rights of workers" which demands in article 15:

> „Each employee ‚must' have access to vocational training and maintain this access throughout his entire working life... The responsible territorial entities, enterprises and the social partners should create the preconditions for further and continuing training in their respective area of responsibility which will enable everyone to undergo retraining especially by means of educational leave and to acquire new know-how particularly in connection with the technological developments." (Community Charter of fundamental social rights of workers, quoted by the Commission of the EU (COM(97) 180, p. 8)

This is the basic demand concerning all questions of policy. It must, therefore, be a focal issue of policies concerning vocational training not only on the European level, but also in the context of the educational policies of each Member State. Since not only learning individuals, the public institutions, governments but also enterprises have a very strong interest in strengthening CVT measures, the authors have in the following chapters analysed the focus of interest (and naturally the degree of translation into action) on the level of politics, the individuals concerned individuals and the economy (or enterprises) as well.

3.4.1 Challenges of governmental policies: The socio-political dimension: Impact of CVT on disadvantaged groups

The problem of access to CVT is not only a question of the economy but also a problem that concerns the field of politics and the interests of the individuals as well: CVT as an opportunity to learn and to acquire vocational qualifications may be (and is very often) seen as an appropriate instrument to combat social inequality. This refers especially to those target groups who are disadvantaged (women, the long-term unemployed, low qualified workers and so on). But first and foremost, this is a political demand and a social duty as well.

This political goal, which is shaped by the demand that CVT must also have strong effects within the field of social and labour market policy, was laid down in Article 5 of the FORCE program, the most important objectives being:

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„(c) to enable the least qualified employees, independent of their status, to attend continuing vocational training schemes and thus reach the first level of qualification;

(d) to promote real equal opportunities between men and women in respect of access to continuing vocational training in line with the conditions laid down in the individual Member States;

(h) to guarantee all employees, who are citizens of one of the Member States, equal treatment in respect of access to continuing vocational training schemes;

(i) to facilitate in a concrete manner access to continuing vocational training and its use by all those interested in line with needs to continuing vocational training." (Council of the European Communities: [Recommendations] 1993)."

3.4.1.1 The link between education level and access to CVT

Although it seems obvious (at least from the theoretical point of view) that increasing the opportunities for access to measures of lifelong vocational learning strengthens the chances of social advancement, we know on the other hand that in reality CVT is an instrument which is primarily effective in maintaining the social status or occupational position acquired and only then in encouraging social advancement. In both cases the individuals concerned are those who have been successful in the world of work.

But for the disadvantaged individuals who have failed during their vocational career or who never had the chance to successfully make the transition to the labour market, the probability of doing this by means of job-related CVT is rather low. Not only the results of German researchers (see Arbeitsgruppe BildungsReport 1994, p. 740; Münk/Lipsmeier 1997, p. 103 ff; BMBW 1990, p. 238) underline this problem of a „pretraining-continuing training syndrome", but also the OECD has formulated the same finding with regard to the OECD Member States:

> „Participation in job-related continuing education and training is closely linked to the previously attained level of education. In all countries, those with the lowest levels of education also have the lowest levels of participation in CET, while those with tertiary education attain the highest levels of participation in CET. These findings apply to both the employed and the unemployed. Initial skill differences are thus amplified by subsequent training decisions by employers and employees." (OECD [Education at a glance] 1996, p. 131 f.)

Table 12 illustrates clearly that there is a close connection between the level of formal qualification attained and the degree of participation or access to CVT-measures. In all European Member States (and in the OECD as well) the CVT participation rate increases together with the level of formal educational and vocational qualification acquired.

If this amplifying effect of CVT holds true, this aspect must become the focal point of interest. Naturally the strengthening of CVT can never be a task for enterprises or the economy but it has to become part of the active social and labour market policies of all European governments and of the European Union as well. In the following, the authors, therefore, present some focal results concerning the situation of some selected disadvantaged groups and their chances of access to measures of CVT within the European Member States.

Table 12:

Participation in job-related CVT as a percentage of the employed population aged 25 to 64

	Year	Gender	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education	Non university tertiary education	University-level education	All levels of education
During the 12-month period preceding the survey								
Finland	1993	M+W	–	27	40	61	61	41
		Men	–	26	37	58	58	38
		Women	–	29	44	63	65	44
France	1994	M+W	8	28	42	72	57	40
		Men	7	26	40	76	46	38
		Women	8	30	46	69	75	43
Germany	1994	M+W	–	15	28	43	50	33
		Men	–	–	29	44	50	35
		Women	–	14	28	40	50	31
During the 6-month period preceding the survey								
Sweden	1995	M+W	28	31	41	60	60	44
		Men	27	30	38	58	53	40
		Women	28	32	44	62	68	47
During the 4-week period preceding the survey								
Belgium	1994	M+W	1	1	2	4	6	3
		Men	1	1	3	5	6	3
		Women	0.5	1	2	3	6	2
Denmark	1994	M+W	–	7	14	21	24	15
		Men	–	5	11	19	21	13
		Women	–	8	17	22	29	18
Greece	1994	M+W	–	–	–	–	–	1
		Men	–	–	–	–	–	1
		Women	–	–	–	–	–	0.5
Ireland	1994	M+W	1	2	5	7	8	4
		Men	1	2	4	6	8	3
		Women	1	3	6	8	9	6
Italy	1994	M+W	–	1	2	–	3	1
		Men	0.3	1	2	–	2	1
		Women	–	1	2	–	3	2
Spain	1994	M+W	0.3	1	6	5	8	3
		Men	0.2	1	5	4	7	2
		Women	1	2	8	6	9	4
United Kingdom	1994	M+W	–	3	12	24	24	13
		Men	–	3	11	21	22	12
		Women	–	4	13	26	28	14

Source: OECD [Education at a glance] 1995, p. 133

3.4.1.2 CVT participation of unemployed people

One of the most serious social and economic problems facing Europe are unemployed people. As outlined in Chapter 2, nearly all European Member States are concerned with this problem. Unemployment varies depending on age (youth unemployment is much higher than the unemployment of people aged more than 25), depending on gender (women have higher rates than men) and depending on educational level (skilled workers suffer less from unemployment than low or even unskilled workers; see e. g. European Commission [Key figures] 1996, p. 10).

This tendency towards structural inequality also has consequences for the participation rate of unemployed people in CVT measures. Normally, unemployed people cannot participate in any CVT measure which is provided by enterprises. This means vice versa that most of the unemployed people attend compensative or curative CVT measures which are provided and financed by the government or other bodies.

Table 13:

Participation in job-related CVT as a percentage of the unemployed population aged 25 to 64

	Year	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education	Non university tertiary education	University-level education	All levels of education
During the 12-month period preceding the survey							
France	1994	14	22	38	66	75	35
Germany	1994	8	10	19	24	21	16
During the 4-week-period preceding the survey							
Belgium	1994	--	--	--	--	--	5
Denmark	1994	--	7	12	10	18	11
Greece	1994	--	--	--	--	--	1
Ireland	1994	0,4	1	4	8	9	2
Italy	1993	--	--	--	--	--	1
Spain	1994	1	5	16	14	35	8
United Kingdom	1994	--	2	7	15	14	6

Source: OECD/Education at a glance 1995, p. 134

As table 13 illustrates, the degree of participation in CVT by unemployed people is generally rather low. Only in those Member States which use CVT as one instrument among others to combat unemployment, do the rates become higher. This is especially the case in France where unemployed workers are one of the most important target groups of CVT. Brandsma et al. refer especially to the French system of „GRETA", which are associations of institutions for CVT particularly for the public sector and the unemployed. In 1991 for example, GRETA had some 660,000 participants. In Germany, we have much lower rates of unemployed CVT-participants, but Germany also has specific programs funded by governmental legislation (see for example the so-called „Arbeitsförderungsgesetz" Employment Promotion Act), which give support explicitly for disadvantaged unemployed people by offering them CVT-measures.

Nearly all Member States have launched during the last decade more or less expensive programs in order to integrate or reintegrate unemployed workers into the labour markets. In Spain and Portugal, these measures were part of national reforms of VET or occupation plans. In many others such efforts were concentrated on the enlargement and improvement of already existing CVT schemes. This strategy was chosen by Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the UK and (to a lesser degree) also by Germany. Most of these strategies aim at imparting basic skills and offering a second (or even a first) chance on the labour markets. Normally such measures follow the concept of job-related learning (learning within the process of work) (see also Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 51 ff.).

In addition to these strategies, efforts have been made in recent years to enlarge open distance learning (ODL) in order to meet the special needs and interests of unemployed people.

But the authors repeat in this context a result of research, which is also confirmed by Brandsma et al. As already stated in Chapter 2, CVT can not be an appropriate instrument for an active labour market policy (at least not for the disadvantaged group of unemployed people). Brandsma et al. resume in this context, that „its low efficiency is well known and confirmed by more extensive experience" (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 50).

3.4.1.3 Age as a limiting factor for CVT access

Contrary to the idea of ‚lifelong learning' promoted throughout Europe, reality shows that learning in general and especially vocational learning and CVT is a process of qualification, which mainly takes place during the first decade of employment.

Table 14:

Participation by age in job-related CVT
(percentage of the employed population aged 25 to 64, by age groups)

		Age groups			
		25-34 years	35-44 years	45-64 years	Total
During the 12-month period preceding the survey					
FIN	1990	51	49	40	46
F	1992	43	27	11	27
G	1991	33	29	21	27
SW	1993	36	33	41	36
During the 4-week period preceding the survey					
DK	1991	17	17	11	15
IRL	1992	5	4	2	4
S	1992	6	2	1	3
UK	1992	12	12	8	11

Source: OECD [Lifelong learning for all] 1996, p. 322

As the above table 14 illustrates, all Member States (including some OECD Member States which have not been quoted by the authors) have the highest rate of participation in the first age group of those who are between 25 and 35 years old. The rate declines slightly in the next age group whereas the oldest age group has, in comparison to the first and second group, a very small participation rate. The fact that the rates for Denmark, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom are much smaller has to do with the short-term nature of the survey which refers to a period of 4 weeks.

Although the OECD data do not concern all European Member States, the authors think that this trend (which is not new but well known scientific findings) also holds true for the rest of the European Member States.

3.4.1.4 Access of women as disadvantaged persons within the labour markets

What is surprising at first sight is the OECD research result that within the OECD Member States „among the employed a larger proportion of women than of men participate in job-related CET (that means CVT) in most countries" (OECD/Education at a glance 1996, p. 131 f.). And a quick glance at the statistical data confirms this theory (see table 12 above). With the exception of Germany, Belgium and Greece all the Member States mentioned have among their employed population a larger proportion of female than of male CVT-participants. And even these exceptions are not very significant. The German analysis underlines for example that differences concerning gender-specific participation is „generally low. The participation rate of men is only 3% higher than that of women" (Schmidt 1996, p. 95).

Contrary to this, Brandsma, Kessler and Münch sum up concerning the same problem:

> „Everywhere in Europe we find this phenomenon that women participate less than men in continuing vocational training. Although there seem to be exceptions (particularly in Spain and Ireland), there is still a trend for a lower participation of women in continuing training." (Brandsma/Kessler/Münch 1995, p. 46)

Brandsma et al. add (1995, p. 46 f.) that women in Denmark are less represented in full-time measures of CVT whereas they are over-represented in measures of ODL (Open Distance

Learning). In Belgium, women are less represented in job-related CVT measures whereas they have a higher degree of representation in the field of upgrading CVT.

Even in Greece the participation of women has decreased during the last decade although the tradition of more ‚conservative' social values (e.g. women are responsible for the family) in these countries in southern Europe is stronger than in the north. In addition to this information, Brandsma et al. give an interesting hint by analysing the German situation: whereas the western part has a higher degree of men (57 % versus 43%), in the eastern part 62 % of the CVT participants are female and only 38 % male. They explain this phenomenon first with a higher level of qualification (initial training) and second with an higher activity rate of women in the eastern part of Germany.

In respect of the data quoted above from the OECD analysis (see table 12), the theory of Brandsma et al. does not hold strong. As the OECD analysis illustrates, the female CVT-participation is higher in most of the European Member States than the participation rate of men (even referring to nearly all levels of formal qualification). This is true even for those countries with the lowest degree of employed women (Spain, Greece, Italy, Ireland; see table 15): Among these countries, it is exclusively Greece which has a minimum preponderance of the male CVT-participation rate whereas (again following the OECD data) the Member States Spain, Ireland and Italy have a higher degree of female CVT-participation.

Table 15:

Employed women within the European labour markets 1983/1992 (%)

(only women)		EU	B	DK	G	GR	S	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	SW	UK
active population	'92	41.6	40.6	46.8	42.6	36.8	36.1	44.6	35.4	36.8	37.5	40.4	41.7	44.4	47.4	47.9	43.3
economically active population	'83	–	34.3	45.2	38.6	32.7	29.5	40.7	30.7	32.0	33.1	33.1	38.2	39.6	47.7	–	40.9
	'92	41	39.4	46.3	41.7	34.8	32.9	43.3	35.3	35.1	37.0	39.4	41.6	44.1	48.8	48.5	44.5
unemployed	'92	49.3	57.6	57.5	55.4	60.4	51.1	56.1	36.0	53.7	51.0	56.6	43.8	52.9	38.0	37.8	32.6

Source: Eurostat [Europe in Figures] 1995, p. 184 f.

On the other hand, the authors agree according to the general result of Brandsma et al.: „Everywhere in Europe it can be said that a low level of employment of women in the European Union means a low level of participation in continuing training." (1995, p. 47). And indeed the OECD analyses together with the above mentioned table 15 illustrate that those countries with the highest percentage degree of employed women (Finland and Sweden) have a higher participation degree than men.

But the authors think that this trend is not necessarily caused by a gender-specific problem. The data are not appropriate proof of a gender-specific correlation but they document that, together with an increasing rate of employed people, the degree of CVT-participation increases too (concerning female and male participation as well). This explains at the same time the higher participation rate of women in the eastern part of Germany in comparison to the western part.

In addition to this, the above theory also holds true in relation to the total level of the active population (see data according to 1992 in table 15). But it must be pointed out once more that these data merely prove one single European development: the rate of women within the European labour markets is increasing. And this statistical fact may be followed by an assumption which is confirmed by the experience within some Member States (for example Germany see Schmidt 1996): together with the increasing rate of employed women the rate of CVT participation increases too. But this development refers to both genders.

Nevertheless we agree with the basic theory of women as a disadvantaged group on the labour markets because women suffer from structural disadvantages. Compared with male employees, women have in general lower degrees of formal qualifications. More women than men work in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations; the female rate of half-time working contracts is much higher; for biological reasons (children) women have very often have breaks during their career; women very often work in occupations with are gender specific (social and health care).

The sum of these factors may easily lead to the conclusion that this is a rather bad starting point in respect of their access to and participation in CVT schemes. Formulated in a more concrete manner, the authors draw the conclusion that in all probability CVT measures for women very often lead to short-term qualifications on a rather low level. They are on-the-job learning measures related to very concrete demands at their workplaces. CVT schemes for women seldom lead to career advancement.

In addition to this, the degree of female CVT participation depends very much on the sector. There are some sectors like construction or mining and quarrying where the percentage rate of female employees is very low whereas other sectors like health and social care have very high rates of female employees. But contrary to the above theory, the degree of female CVT participation is very high in those sectors with a very low percentage rate of employed women (e.g. construction and mining). Schmidt documents in the German CVT-survey that in the sectors construction, mining and quarrying the female participation rate is 25 % and 39 % (men: 15 % and 33 %). This contradiction may be explained by the fact that only few women are employed in those sectors and that the women who are employed in these sectors are more highly qualified than the average female employee for example in the hotel and restaurant sector (19 % female, 30 % male) or banking and insurance (36 % female and 46 % male) (see Schmidt 1996, p. 95 f.). And with an increasing degree of qualification, the CVT-participation rate increases too.

But although these statements and data concerning the actual situation of women are relatively concrete in respect of the German situation, we have to repeat that because of the lack of data, these results and correlations must remain on the level of probabilities, plausibilities and presumptions. Without empirical valid data we cannot draw more scientific and valid conclusions concerning all European Member States.

3.4.2 Challenges of the economy: The entrepreneurial approach to CVT

From the economic point of view, it is undoubtedly the case that CVT influences the economic development of a nation and the economic situation of the individuals as well in a positive way. The research work of the OECD has proved this positive influence on educational outcome and social returns as well. But nevertheless it is not possible to prove with scientific instruments the degree of this positive influence of investments in education and CVT exactly although the economic sciences have many different methods to measure correlations between the degree of educational investment and the degree of economic success. According to this, the German economists Dicke/Glismann and Gröhn also state in their analysis of the German situation of CVT: „All attempts to explain the economic success of enterprises, banks or national economies inevitably fail because they cannot identify the final reasons for this success“ (Dicke/Glismann/Gröhn 1995, S. 188). They find themselves in the tradition of Schumpeter who also was very pessimistic that the success of such an scientific approach, which is able to analyse effects and correlations between educational investments and economic development, could be able to lead to clear and scientifically exact results:

> „... theories like the one of objective opportunities in the environment, of increase in population, of the ‚spirit‘ of a nation's civilisation, of technological progress can never be adequate. Such attempts may hold true approximately in special cases where, as a matter of fact, no great change has occurred in any of the factors of growth but one. I do not know of any historical instance of this“. (Schumpeter 1954, S. 124)

Although we are not able to isolate CVT as a contributory factor from the variety and complexity of other contributory factors, we are relatively sure that CVT at least is one important factor among others. This position is also confirmed by OECD analyses which state that CVT (both formal and non-formal type) now on the level of OECD Member States (but also on the European level) „increases worker productivity" (OECD [Lifelong Learning] 1996, p. 153) and that there is a positive correlation between the salary and the level of qualification: „Training has a substantial effect on wages; workers typically receive between one-third and half of the substantial benefits accruing from the investment in learning made by the employees." (OECD [Lifelong Learning] 1996, p. 153). In addition to this, the World Bank also underlines in its ‚policy paper' that „the development of a skilled labour force makes an important contribution to development" (World Bank 1991, p. 56).

3.4.2.1 CVT-providers within the European Member States

The enterprises make up the biggest share of CVT providers in all European Member States. Most of the data in the following explanations are drawn from the results of the CVT Survey which was made up by EUROSTAT. This means that the information is based on a sample of about 60,000 European enterprises from a size of 10 employees up to more than 1000 employees. But it also means that the following analysis is a snapshot of the Europe of the Twelve and that those enterprises with less than 10 employees are not concerned.

On the one hand, these very small enterprises have a very important quantitative position not only in the southern Member States of Europe (for example Greece), but also throughout Europe. An economical analysis referring to the Europe of the 15 states that

- more than 90 percent of all European enterprises employ less than 10 persons;
- in 1992 Europe had 8 million enterprises with only one employee;
- small and very small enterprises are active in many different sectors;
- medium-sized enterprises are active within manufacturing industries of the EU;
- big enterprises dominate the traditional capital-intensive industries and the big service industries (EUROSTAT [Enterprises in Europe] 1996, p. 37).

Very small enterprises, therefore, have an extremely important economic position. The fact that the CVT-survey excludes this group of enterprises does not matter in respect of CVT because most of these enterprises do not have their own strategies and funds for providing CVT measures for their employees or even for external people (please refer to Chapter 1.1.4 for more information on this issue).

Regarding table 16 and figure 10, it is obvious that the data are incomplete not only because of the restriction on size (enterprises smaller than 10 employees are missing) but also because the new Member States are not yet included. The Europe of the 15 has in total about 15,777,000 enterprises (see Chapter 1). And of these, the survey only takes into consideration just over 50 %. But nevertheless this sample seems large enough to draw serious conclusions from this data set.

Table 16:

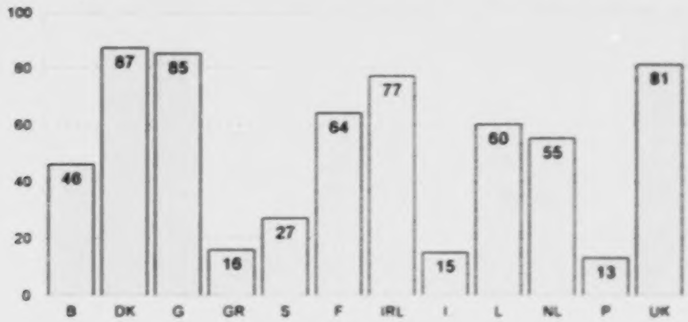
Percentage of providers (> 10 employees) of CVT by Member State in % and thousands (1993)

	EUR 12	B	DK	G	GR	S	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
%	58	46	87	85	16	27	64	77	15	60	56	13	81
thousands	898.7	26.8	34.3	178.7	14.9	116.2	114.3	7.7	128.8	2.3	47.1	31.9	195.7

Source: CVT-Survey 1994, p. 1

Figure 10:

Percentage of providers (10+ employees) of CVT by Member State, 1993



Source Eurostat CVTS 1994

In comparison to the European average of 58 % the strongest providers of CVT are situated in the more developed European Member States. There are exceptions depending on different factors: Ireland and Luxembourg, but also Denmark are very small countries – a fact which leads to a certain lack of comparability of their economic structure. The situation in the UK is also very specific because of their singular concept of vocational qualification (NCVQ, see Chapter 2). But in general, the less developed countries have at the same time less CVT providers and vice versa.

A high degree of enterprises providing CVT is the basic requirement for broad access to CVT. But the likelihood that an employee works for an enterprise which provides CVT varies considerably in the European Member States as table 17 illustrates. This factor ranges between 39 % (Portugal) and up to 96 % (Germany). In this context, Member States with high levels are Denmark, the UK, France, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (80% or more), whereas the countries with low levels (less than 67 %) are Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain and Belgium.

The probability of working for a CVT provider and, at the same time, of participating in a CVT course ranged in 1993 from 24 % (Greece) to 49 % (Ireland). And the above-mentioned separation between developed and less developed Member States also holds true concerning the percentage rate of CVT participants in relation to the employees of all enterprises of each Member State. Again we find the lowest rates in Greece and Portugal (13 %) and in Italy (14 %). Although there are exceptions like the UK or Ireland, these exceptions can be explained with different factors which have already been mentioned above.

Table 17:

Employees and CVT course participation

	Employees of CVT providers as % of employees of all enterprises	Employees who participated in CVT courses as % of employees of CVT providers	Employees who participated in CVT courses as % of employees of all enterprises
EUR 12	82	35	28
B	67	41	25
DK	93	37	34
G	96	25	24
GR	54	24	13
S	57	36	20
F	87	42	36
IRL	87	49	43
I	53	27	14
L	80	30	24
NL	82	32	25
P	39	35	13
UK	93	41	39

Source: CVT-Survey 1994, p. 4

3.4.2.2 A decisive factor: CVT-participation and the size of enterprises

To a certain extent, the analytical concentration on national differences may become a strategy of window-dressing because this national perspective ignores structural correlations which have nothing to do with specific national characteristics. Two of the most important factors in this category are the size of the enterprise and the sector analysed.

As table 18 and figure 11 illustrate, there is a very close link between the size of an enterprise (referred to the size of employed workers) and the degree of access to and participation in a CVT course. The European average of 28 % of all employees, who have been given access to CVT, is not very useful because of the considerable differences between the sizes of groups of enterprises.

A first glance reveals that the rate of CVT participation increases with the size of the enterprise within a range of 13 % for small enterprises and 43 % for big industries. And this increase is linear which indicates the very strong correlation between the factor ‚size' and ‚CVT-participation-rate'.

Table 18:

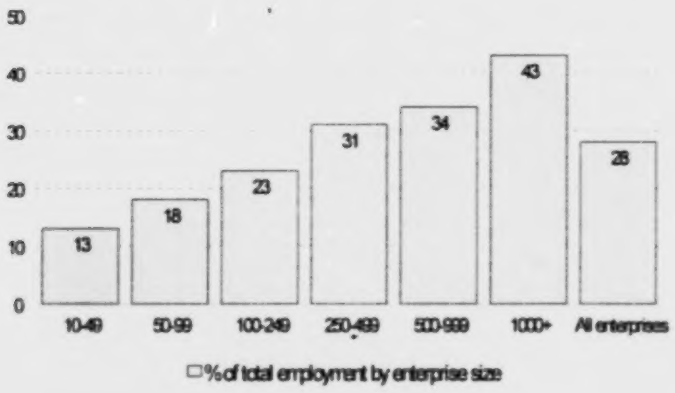
Employees who participate in CVT courses (1993)
(% of total employment by enterprise size)

Size	**10-49**	**50-99**	**100-249**	**250-499**	**500-999**	**> 1000**	**All enterprises**
Number of employees	13	18	23	31	34	43	28

Source: CVT-Survey 1994, p. 3

Figure 11:

Employees who participate in CVT courses,1993 EUR 12



Source: Eurostat-CVTS 1994

This strong correlation not only holds true on the European level but also on the level of nearly all European Member States (see table 19). This table documents on the one hand that the percentage level of participation within Europe is very different. Taking for example the size group of 10-49 employees, the participation rate of CVT-courses oscillates between 2 % in Italy, 5 % in Portugal and 24 % in Ireland or even 37 % in Denmark. Similar differences can be identified in other size groups.

Table 19:

Employee participation in CVT courses by enterprise size (1993)
(percent of total employment)

Size of enterprise	10-49 employees	50-99 employees	100-249 employees	250-499 employees	500-999 employees	> 1000 employees
EUR 12	**13**	**18**	**23**	**31**	**34**	**43**
B	14	15	16	30	46	42
DK	37	32	37	34	33	28
G	17	16	16	22	22	34
GR	4	12	17	19	24	18
S	7	9	15	26	31	45
F	11	24	31	43	45	54
IRL	24	32	46	59	47	59
I	2	5	9	15	23	31
L	14	17	23	30	14	39
NL	13	19	24	30	30	38
P	5	6	11	12	23	32
UK	20	28	36	43	48	52

Source: CVT-Survey 1994, p. 3

But the above trend of a very strong correlation between the size of an enterprise and the degree of the participation rate of its employees holds true for nearly all Member States. As described above, this trend occurs on different high or low levels, but the increasing tendency is nearly the same in all cases.

Nevertheless, two exceptions are worth mentioning: first Denmark which has a rather well balanced distribution between 28 % (> 1000 employees) and 37 % (10-49 employees). At the same time, it is the only Member State which has the highest percentage rate (37 %) in the smallest size group. And second Germany which has three groups with a rather similar distribution of the participation rate: the first group is made up of the size groups 10-49, 50-99 and 100-249 employees (17 %, 16 % and 16 %), the size groups 250-499 and 500-999 employees (each 22 %) and finally the largest size of enterprise (> 1000) with 34 %.

Probably this rather proportionate distribution of the participation rate is related to the fact that German industry always had a rather specific structure. Whereas most of the Member States in southern Europe are characterised by very small enterprises, Germany has for historical reasons a very strong tradition in respect of medium-sized enterprises. This is an effect of the singular progress of the industrial revolution during the last century and, as a result of this singular progress, a very strong tradition of trades and crafts. But despite this the German case also unequivocally supports the above theory of an increasing degree of CVT participation in line with a growing number of employed people.

Finally, the authors will close this chapter on the size of enterprises by analysing the relationship between the number of small enterprises and their contribution to vocational qualification within the context of CVT courses (see table 20 and figure 12).

Table 20:

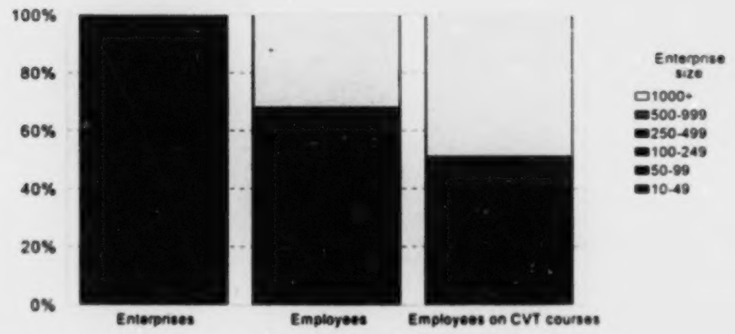
Breakdown of total enterprises, total employees and employees on CVT courses by enterprise size (1993)

Enterprise size (number of employees)	Enterprises	Employees	Employees on cvt courses
10-49	81	26	13
50-99	10	11	7
100-249	6	13	11
250-499	2	10	10
500-999	0,8	8	10
> 1000	0,6	32	49
Total	100	100	100

Source: CVT-Survey 1994, p. 1

Figure 12:

Breakdown of total enterprises, total employees and employees on CVT courses, by enterprise size, 1993 - Eur 12



Source: Eurostat-CVTS 1994

This table documents the fact that 81% of European enterprises employ 10-49 employees which makes up about 26% of all employees. Adding the next class with 50-99 employees, we already have 91% of all employees. But together these two classes only provide 20% of all employees with CVT courses. At the other end of the scale we find the two biggest classes of enterprises (500-999 and >1000) with 59% of all employees with CVT courses.

But this does not at all mean that the SMEs do not need CVT – the opposite is true. The focal problem is rather that these SMEs suffer from structural disadvantages which have already been mentioned in the first chapter. We do not want to repeat these decisive disadvantages but we should remember that it is not only the lack of investment strength but also the lack of transparency, the lack of appropriate methods to define their qualification needs and so on.

But given the enormous importance of these SMEs, the promotion of SMEs by means of an appropriate CVT policy must become an absolute priority. All European Member States (exception: Luxembourg: lack of data) have during the last decade launched different political and economic programs in order to support the specific needs of SMEs in respect of CVT (European Commission [Synoptic Tables] 1992, p. 43 f.). But the impact of these activities has not been so marked up to now (as explained in Chapter 1).

3.4.2.3 *The importance of enterprises: CVT-participation referring to different sectors of the economy*

A central result of the CVT survey of European enterprises is that the differences in access and participation are very high depending on the sector in which CVT takes place (see 21).

Table 21:

Sectors and CVT courses 1993 (EUR 12)

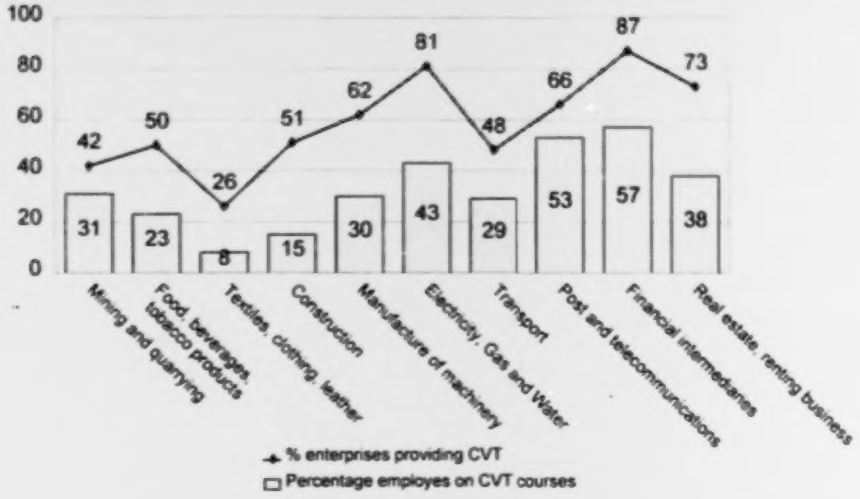
Sectors	Percentage employees in CVT courses
Financial intermediaries (banking and insurance)	57 %
Post and telecommunications	53 %
Electricity, Gas and Water	49 %
Auxiliary activities	43 %
Real estate, renting business activities and other services	38 %
Manufacture of non metallic products	35 %
Manufacture of transport equipment	32 %
Mining and quarrying, manufacturing industries	31 %
Manufacture of machinery include electrical equipment	30 %
Sale and repair of vehicles	29 %
Transport	29 %
Retail trade and repairs	27 %
Food, beverages, tobacco products	23 %
Hotels and restaurants	23 %
Wholesale trade (except for vehicles	21 %
Paper and printing	20 %
Manufacture of metals, metallic products	19 %
Construction	15 %
Other types of manufacture	10 %
Textiles, clothing, leather	8 %

Source: Eurostat - CVTS 1994

As this table illustrates, the differences in CVT participation between sectors may be even more important than the differences between the European Member States. Between the highest degree of participation within the sectors ‚Financial intermediaries/banking and insurance' and ‚Post and telecommunications' and the sectors with the lowest participation rate (‚construction', ‚textiles, clothing, leather'), there are differences of more than 40 percent. This is a very important result because it documents that depending on the formulation of the research question, sectoral differences and characteristics may be more central than national differences. This phenomenon also holds true for the situation and the competitiveness of SMEs which also have very strong common structures throughout Europe and whose economic situation and CVT policy depend more on their affiliation to a certain sector than on their national affiliation (see Chapter 1).

Figure 13:

Sectors, CVT courses and employees participating in CVT



Source: Eurostat-CVTS 1994

In addition to this key result the above table also reflects „the fact that the more modern, higher added-value sectors of economic activity regard training as an essential prerequisite to remaining competitive, or that they possess the necessary resources to provide training" (CVT Survey 1994, p. 4). This may be at the same time a reference to the hypothesis that the increase in and development of New Technologies and of new forms of work organisation requires a higher degree of vocational training and of skill updating in a changing world of work.

4. CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS OF CVT IN EUROPE

As this analysis proves, considerable efforts have been throughout Europe to improve CVT structures and measures. These efforts have been made on all levels of social and political activity:

- Awareness of the need for lifelong learning has grown among individuals who are forced to upgrade their qualifications in order to keep pace with rapid technological change;
- Awareness of the need for lifelong learning has also grown in public institutions and amongst the European governments. On the one hand they are responsible for reducing the negative effects of unemployment (by strengthening second chance schemes, by offering compensative CVT, Open Distance Learning and so on) and, on the other hand, they are the main and most important political force which has to provide the political and institutional framework to promote CVT in order to reach a high degree of economic competitiveness.
- Awareness of the need for lifelong learning also has grown within the economy: The enterprises are forced to promote their human resources for purely economic reasons and they recognised that there is no alternative to the concept of lifelong learning.
- And finally there is also considerable awareness on the European level of the growing importance of job-related CVT. The institutions of the European Union have often been criticised because of their growing bureaucracy, their lack of flexibility and because of the danger of a concentration of political power within the European institutions because this threatens to weaken the political sovereignty of the Member States. But on the other hand it is beyond question that the institutions of the European Union have, during the last decade, been the key forum for activities

concerning the promotion of lifelong learning. It is not just the architecture of a legal and institutional framework and the possibility to discuss focal problems of advanced industrial societies within a European forum which makes Brussels important. Equally important are the efforts to develop this discussion between the European Member States and to give them a chance to discuss their national problems and approaches to solving these problems. One of the best examples of this is the institution, CEDEFOP. It was set up more than 20 years ago and was the result of European efforts to make improvements on all social, political and economical levels.

- A crucial and common characteristic of all key memoranda (see European Commission Memorandum 1991) and the principle guidelines concerning the framework of European policy is the fact that it never was possible to reach a consensus among the Member States. This is proved by the national statements to the Memorandum for vocational training for the nineties; by the very central White Paper concerning competitiveness and employment of 1993 and finally by their last White Paper concerning the idea of the ‚Learning society'. It is surely not by chance that general concepts of the OECD like the ‚Knowledge-based society' (1996) but also proposals and approaches concerning more specific problems of modern societies (for example the meaning of SMEs and especially the importance of developing human resources by VET and CVT) have been formulated by the OECD and the European Union as well.

Many of these similar approaches to solving the problems of developing societies, their economy and to promoting the interests of the individuals living and working in these modern societies, are highly comparable because the problems of the so-called ‚advanced industrial societies' are very similar. Therefore these common problems have been the issues which structured this analysis. Structural aspects cannot be evaluated by analysing the varied diversity of systems of education, VET and CVT throughout Europe. One key fact remains: all European Member States try to solve similar problems of social, economic and technological change and the resulting changes in the organisation of work. This strong similarity of development is the result of two main trends within all European Member States:

First, in respect of the economic aspects, it is the key word 'globalisation of the economy', which makes human resources and, by extension, job-related vocational qualifications and their permanent upgrading so important. In connection with this central issue of globalisation, we can state that human resources today have become one of the most important factors of production: investing in vocational training and especially in CVT therefore means at the same time investing in economic success and in economic competitiveness.

The second aspect concerns the social and political development of the European Union. During the last 30 years, we have had in Europe two political systems which had non-democratic governments (Greece and Spain). Today we may say without restriction that all the nations in Europe have democratic structures. Even in the eastern part of Europe many things have changed and we are thinking about a process of political and economical integration of most of the nations situated in the eastern part of Europe. Although this integration constitutes an enormous political and economic challenge, this process of democratisation has in any case strong repercussions not only for the social structures of the nations concerned but also for the systems of education and CVT as well.

The human beings living in this democratised Europe are advancing their claims to adequate vocational qualifications and the chance to upgrade these qualifications. Seen from the perspective of the individuals, this is not just about their economic interests in guaranteeing their material existence. They also a strong desire for self-realisation in respect of the work they do. It would be short-sighted to define the individual interest in obtaining a lifelong vocational qualification exclusively in terms of economic arguments. And even the enterprises, which do really have such an exclusive economic interest, have now recognised that a vocational qualification which covers these key non-economic interests also leads to better economic results. In addition to this, the modern forms of work organisation in particular require much

more than just vocational skills. Therefore CVT must promote core qualifications and also the social competencies in order to improve the effectiveness of its employees.

The analysis by the authors has documented that we do nevertheless encounter throughout Europe many problems in the field of CVT. We find a very long list of European problems and in respect of existing political and economic issues: the problem of ageing in European societies, the enormous degree of social inequality within the Member States, strong regional disparities within and among the Member States concerning the level of social welfare, a long-lasting fight against unemployment which does not show any signs of success in any Member State, and a very high number of individuals who are members of structurally disadvantaged groups on the labour markets.

And in addition to this, in Europe we find lots of problems affecting the field of CVT directly . Probably one of the most important problems is the lack of money. If it is true that the most important strategy of the European Member States must be to invest in human resources, it is quite clear that this strategy is connected with spending money. But even the enterprises follow the strategy of reducing expenditure on VET and CVT in times of economic crisis. This means that the quality of human resources threatens to decline in a situation in which high level vocational qualifications are needed more than ever.

For example, ETUC criticises the low impact of the recommendations of the European Council concerning access to CVT (1993) and states, that „in most Member States no real progress could be achieved in respect of access... and that the access conditions have (even) worsened as a consequence of a cut in public funds" (ETUC Report 1997, quoted by European Commission [Report] 1997, p. 28). This financial argument is, therefore, a very strong accusation concerning not only the policy of enterprises but even much more the policies of public institutions and governments. Compensative measures and courses of CVT are expensive and very often provided for those who are disadvantaged. But if the financial power of the public sector is declining (and this is the case in nearly all European Member States), the public sector will not be able to finance schemes of this kind.

As the European Commission's report concerning access to CVT and also the EUROSTAT CVT survey have proved, considerable progress has been made in the field of CVT during the last decade throughout Europe. But in general, there are considerable gaps in data as this analysis illustrates. This situation is improving slightly but even today there is no well defined system of indicators like, for example, the system which has been developed and discussed by the OECD. Therefore we need more scientifically based monitoring of the development of CVT within the European Member States. In general we need more data and those data must not only be complete, but they also must be comparable.

The second serious problem is the lack of transparency in the different systems of CVT. In 1993 the European Council formulated a recommendation concerning access to CVT („Council Recommendation on Access to Continuing Vocational Training"). The variety of measures and forms of CVT throughout Europe is so great that it is almost impossible to obtain an overview of the impact and results. In respect of the enormous variety and in connection with its complaints about the lack of impact of the above-mentioned recommendation of the European Council, the ETUC (EGB) proposes that the European Commission should change its recommendation to a directive which would have much stronger legal consequences.

And finally the analysis of CVT in Europe has illustrated that there are common efforts, but no major impact. Referring to one key result among others, the CVT survey has shown that only 28 % of employees had access to CVT in 1993 within the Europe of the 12. Although the trend is increasing throughout Europe, this is not very much. And especially the weaker developed European Member States in general had less success than the economically stronger Member States, who have already had, for varying amounts of time, well developed systems of VET and CVT which are based on rather strong economies. This fact, which is defined by the European Commission as a „discrepancy", is surely the most serious problem, as the Commission summarises:

> „The Commission has observed that the most important initiatives and the extension of continuing training to include the concept of lifelong continuing training are being developed in those Member States which have made the most progress in respect of access to continuing training. It draws attention to the risk of increasing divergence between the Member States and to the need of bearing this in mind when establishing the program for the structural funds, particularly in respect of the cohesion countries." (Council Recommendation about access to continuing vocational training, 1997, p. 42).

Nevertheless, the common problems and economic challenges in many fields of policy and especially of VET and CVT will probably tend to lead to political rapprochement of the European Member States. On the one hand, this process is the effect of pressure caused by economic factors and also by the policy of the institutions of the European Union (see for example the discussion concerning the modular approach, the European discussion about certification and accreditation of skills which both have serious negative consequences for the German system of VET and CVT. In addition to these subjects of European discussion, this pressure of rapprochement was explicitly formulated by the European Council in Florence and then confirmed in Dublin in 1996: „The European Council asks for consideration to be given to the fact that the systems of general and vocational education in the European Union will have to adapt fully." (European Council in Florence 1996, quoted by: Report of the Commission, p. 6)

But on the other hand this pressure of political rapprochement is also an opportunity for the development of structures of general qualifications and of job-related qualifications. Surely, there is no ,one best way' in respect of the architecture and formation of processes of vocational qualification. Probably this is the most important explanation for the effectiveness of the formula of ,achieving European unity by not sacrificing its diversity'. But although we are sure that there is no ,one best way', we are also sure, that there is one worst way. This is the strategy of looking backwards and maintaining stiff structures without considering that the world of work and the development and future needs of advanced industrial, knowledge-based societies have changed. Therefore we need more flexibility in Europe, more willingness to discuss strategies of change and more exchange concerning the results and experiences of international and European research as well.

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TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED PERSONS

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1. THEORETICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

1.1 The people involved

A number of social groups are clearly affected more than others by unemployment problems and difficulties with finding and keeping work. In identifying these weaker groups on the labour market, it would at first sight seem worth concentrating on the social groups which, as a result of their social, economic, psychological or demographic characteristics, are over-represented in the official unemployment statistics. However, this approach is too narrow, particularly if it is limited to remunerated unemployment. In many countries, only those who have previously worked for a certain length of time can officially be unemployed. This means that certain groups are excluded in advance, such as school-leavers and those re-entering the labour market. Moreover, in most European countries a considerable proportion of the population of working age do not actually form part of the labour market. However, the boundaries of the labour market are not always as clear, which means that some groups are regarded as being "outside" the labour market, while it is not possible to rule out in advance the idea that a certain proportion of these people is actually looking for work. Typically, this border zone of the labour market is made up of disadvantaged persons. This is significant because those who are outside the labour market are not usually eligible for the labour market measures aimed at finding work (Nicaise et al, 1995). In addition, the idea cannot be ruled out that some of those outside the labour market are not in fact looking for work but that they - rightly or wrongly - assume that they no longer stand a chance on the labour market, sometimes after a long case history. It can thus be established that a negative link exists between levels of participation and level of education. The high unemployment risk run by the low-skilled could be one of the causes which leads them to withdraw from the labour market (OECD, 1989).

However, even within the strict limits of the labour market, the criterion of unemployment is perhaps too restrictive when it comes to detecting the weaker groups. For example, there may be people who do work, but in jobs with unstable employment conditions, in unskilled or part-time jobs, etc.. In addition, some people's careers consist of a collection of temporary, unstable jobs, interspersed with periods of unemployment. A certain proportion of these groups must probably also be included among the disadvantaged persons.

Another approach to detecting the weaker groups is based on the concept of "employability". In this approach, which is frequently used by public (or private) employment services, the extent to which a job-seeker is employable is determined on the basis of his individual characteristics. This quickly leads to divisions ranging from "easy to employ" via "difficult to employ" to "unemployable". The advantage of this pragmatic approach is that attention is not distracted from the heart of the matter, which is to help job-seekers find work. However, a number of significant disadvantages also exist. For instance, the division runs the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which employment services will be less likely to devote much effort to groups of job-seekers who are classed as barely employable or unemployable, since this classification itself indicates in advance that the chance of success is small. Moreover, this approach can have a stigmatising effect. By over-emphasising the importance of the individual characteristics and behaviour of the job-seeker, there is the risk that the responsibility for difficult employability will be placed entirely upon the individual (Erhel et al, 1996). After all, the focus is directed exclusively at the supply side of the labour market, while certain structural and institutional characteristics of labour market operation which work against weaker groups may not be overlooked (see below). Moreover, the notion of employability is the result of a whole set of individual characteristics, some of which - such as age, length of unemployment or ethnic origin - generate much prejudice among employers, so that these prejudices are implicitly absorbed, without question, with the neutral registration of employability.

Keeping all these restrictions in the background, the core idea behind the concept of employability can nonetheless be used to achieve a more specific definition of who can be regarded as disadvantaged groups. Below, we refer to a disadvantage on the labour market if, as a result of personal characteristics, someone has a considerably smaller chance of finding work or, if that person does find work, the jobs concerned are usually marginal (insecure employment conditions, very high flexibility, low pay, etc.). This is the case, for example, among people from the following groups or with the following characteristics:

- immigrants and ethnic minorities;
- handicapped people (physical, mental, social);
- those re-entering the labour market;
- the low-skilled;
- early school-leavers;
- welfare recipients;
- older job-seekers;
- people with a criminal record;
- the long-term unemployed;
- people with an unstable career (occasional temporary work, seasonal work);
- people with health problems.

This list can undoubtedly be supplemented by many other categories. In addition, some further qualifications can be made:

- not all the categories listed are considered disadvantaged persons to the same extent in all European countries;
- the categories listed together form a highly heterogeneous group, each with their own sometimes highly specific problems. It is thus clear that the integration problem facing handicapped job-seekers on the labour market is potentially of a very different nature than the labour market problems facing immigrants. Even within the group of handicapped people, to continue this example, wide diversity exists in terms of the problems facing a physically handicapped person looking for work (for example, the need for an adapted workplace, the need for training in the use of adapted tools) which are very different from the integration problems of a mentally handicapped person. We cannot therefore talk of one unique training tool for disadvantaged persons; a certain amount of differentiation is compulsory;
- the high level of heterogeneity between (and within) the categories listed does not prevent a certain amount of mutual overlapping between some categories. Many disadvantaged persons are thus confronted with an accumulation of disadvantages. Here, it is striking that deficiencies on the level of education and skills are an almost unifying factor between the various categories, whether in terms of the lack of initial education or because the person has unsuitable or obsolete knowledge:
    - immigrants usually have to cope initially with an inadequate knowledge of the language of the host country. In addition, unemployed immigrants typically have a low level of education;
    - the group of handicapped people of working age consists primarily of older males with a relatively low level of education and professional status (Delsen, 1996);
    - among those re-entering the labour market, it cannot be assumed in advance that a qualification shortage exists, but it is possible that some people in this group face the problem of obsolete vocational skills;
    - young people who leave school early enter the labour market inadequately or incompletely qualified;
    - the low-skilled are usually disproportionately over-represented among the long-term unemployed. In addition, the long-term unemployed and, in particular, the very long-term unemployed may have to cope with the obsolescence or loss of previously acquired skills;
    - in addition, all groups, to a greater or lesser extent, suffer in that the sometimes protracted disappearance of the labour process or the situation of never having participated in the labour process can lead to the loss or the lack of basic work attitudes, such as keeping appointments (with respect to timing, for example), accepting authority, being able to concentrate on one task for a longer period, social functioning, meeting the strict requirements which exist within most labour situations.

This summary shows that being at a disadvantage on the labour market usually, but not always, corresponds to inadequate, incomplete or obsolete qualifications and skills. The difficulties these people face in looking for work as a result of their ethnic origins, age, handicap, etc., are then reinforced by their low or inappropriate level of education. This aspect makes it clear in every respect that a possible solution to their problems could, at least partially, lie in increasing their professional skills by following appropriate vocational training. After all, this would remove at least one of their disadvantages. Before examining vocational training for disadvantaged persons in more depth, however, it seems necessary to focus the spotlight on the relationship between a low level of education and labour market opportunities.

1.2 Falling demand for low-skilled labour?

The low-skilled are usually proportionately over-represented among the unemployed. A summary of OECD countries thus shows that people whose level of education is lower than upper secondary education or who have no vocational qualifications are typically one-third to twice as much more at risk of being unemployed (except in Italy and Spain) (OECD, 1994b). The same study also ascertains, on the basis of a more limited group of countries, that the relative unemployment risk for the low-skilled increased dramatically between the end of the 1970s and the end of the 1980s (OECD, 1994a). The low-skilled obviously find work less easily than those with higher qualifications. In addition, the low-skilled, if they do find a job, are also more at risk of losing that job than those with a better education (De Beer, 1996). Various explanations exist for the latter phenomenon. It is possible that more temporary contracts are given for low-skilled jobs. In addition, it seems likely that if there is a decline in industrial activity, the low-skilled workers will be dismissed first. Companies have usually invested more in more highly-trained employees and it is very likely that employees in a superior position will have more company-specific knowledge and experience, so that a company has more to lose in dismissing them. Moreover, the recruitment and dismissal costs for the more highly trained are higher than for the poorly trained.[1]

The higher risk of dismissal for the low-skilled is in every respect one element which explains the high risk of unemployment among this group. The chief reason is probably still the fact that the demand for low-skilled labour has fallen dramatically over time, so that the low-skilled can find work less easily than the more highly-trained. In recent decades, the average training level of the labour force has risen sharply and the proportion of the more highly skilled workers in the labour force rose dramatically, particularly during the 1980s. If, despite this, it is observed that the labour market position of the more highly skilled workers has not deteriorated during the same period, it can only be concluded that the relative demand for more skilled work is risen so much that even this additional demand has been absorbed without difficulty (OECD, 1996). The reverse of this development is that, over the same period, the position of the low-skilled has significantly deteriorated; some authors are even talking about a collapse in the demand for unskilled labour (Nickell and Bell, 1995).

Less certainty exists as to the explanation for this phenomenon. Thus, one hypothesis is that, simply as a result of technological evolution, fewer and fewer jobs are available for low-skilled workers. The introduction of new technologies should lead to an increase in the demand for more highly-skilled labour, at the expense of low-skilled labour. The underlying mechanisms are related to the fact that more highly-skilled labour can adapt more easily to new technologies, the fact that many types of new technology are related to machines taking over the repetitive tasks traditionally performed by low-skilled labour and the observation that computer technology leads to a greater increase in productivity among more highly-skilled workers than among low-skilled workers. In addition to this "upskilling" effect of the introduction of new technology, however, a "deskilling" effect may also be evident. This is the case, for example, where technology reduces the skills needed to perform a certain task, because the technology itself takes over several decisions and actions which previously had to be carried out by the worker (OECD, 1996). The conclusion drawn from the aforementioned study, based on an extensive summary of the literature, is that the "upskilling" effect of technology is primarily relevant, in other words, that technology and more highly-skilled labour are to a high degree complementary. However, the conclusion is much less clear on the relative importance of technological evolution with respect to other factors in explaining the reduced demand for unskilled labour. Technical evolution is indeed identified as an important factor, but "the extent to which it is responsible for this decrease remains, however, a subject of debate" (OECD, 1996, p. 101).

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[1] Finally, in addition to these company-specific factors, an explanation also exists at macro-level for the higher likelihood of dismissal of the less well-trained. This is, specifically, that a number of the most sensitive economic sectors, such as agriculture, industry and the building industry employ proportionately high numbers of poorly trained workers (De Beer, 1996).

In addition to the role of technological evolution, the debate on the fall in demand for low-skilled labour usually also refers to the increased competition from so-called low-wage countries, which have relatively high levels of low-skilled, low-paid labour. As a result of increased trade with these countries, the demand for highly-skilled labour should increase, while the demand for low-skilled labour falls. The phenomenon of delocalisation - the fact that Western companies shift some of their production to low-wage countries - could also be a partial explanation for this evolution. Trade with low-wage countries has indeed risen over time: the proportion of imports into EU countries from non-OECD countries amounted to 5% in 1970 and had risen to 12% by 1990 (OECD, 1996). Nonetheless, most studies on this matter observe that this increase only had a relatively small effect on the division of wages and employment (OECD, 1996). The main argument is still that, although trade with low-wage countries has increased, overall this trade is relatively small within EuropeanGross National Product (GNP) (see also European Commission (1993a). Moreover, this type of trade relates chiefly to manufactured goods and can therefore only exert a limited influence on one segment of European employment - a segment which, moreover, is increasingly losing its importance in economies where employment in the services sector is continually increasing in importance (OECD, 1996).

Technological evolution and international trade can evidently explain some of the decline observed in the demand for low-skilled labour, but something else seems to be afoot. Western economies are witnessing a structural shift from employment in industrial sectors to the services sectors. Many jobs have been lost in industry. Moreover, this loss of employment relates largely to low-skilled jobs, as is clear from the fact that in the 1980s, employment among white-collar, highly-skilled employees in industry in countries such as Germany, France and Italy actually increased. On the other hand, employment in the services sectors has risen dramatically. Moreover, in addition to the many highly-skilled jobs, many low-skilled white-collar jobs have also been created in the services sectors of the aforementioned countries (OECD, 1996). Similar developments are also emerging in other countries (for the Netherlands, see Social and Cultural Planning Office, 1995).

The conclusion which can be drawn from this is that the perceived fall in the demand for unskilled work cannot simply be put down to a dramatic fall in the number of unskilled jobs. We refer in this context to substitution and displacement. In order to explain substitution effects, low-skilled labour is indicated as having become proportionately too expensive as a result of all kinds of institutions, such as minimum wages. The starting point here is that the level of education is used by the employer as an indication of expected productivity. The highly-trained may well be more expensive than the poorly trained, but this is largely compensated by their higher expected productivity. In such a situation, employers will give preference to the more highly-trained. Displacement occurs within a context of excess supply. In the general context of unemployment, job shortages can occur at all qualification levels. A more highly-skilled job-seeker, if he does not immediately find a job which corresponds to his level of training, can be content with a job at a lower qualification level, including lower pay. On balance, the consequence of this will be that the lowest-skilled workers will be displaced at the bottom end, their chances of finding work will fall, without them necessarily being too poorly skilled. In other respects, the displacement hypothesis can also be extended to characteristics other than the level of training. Thurow's vacancy competition model (1975) presupposes that employers place applicants for a vacancy into an imaginary queue. The applicant in first place will eventually get the job. Position in the queue is determined by the training costs which the employer thinks will be involved per applicant. This means that the most highly-skilled will be at the front of the queue. After all, this assumes that the higher the level of training, the lower the training costs. Characteristics such as age, ethnic origin, handicap, etc., will probably also be decisive in the perception of the expected training costs and, therefore, position in the queue. As unemployment grows, the queues for vacancies become longer. The more highly-skilled job-seekers are forced to be satisfied with a less productive job (Van Der Meer, 1993). Low-skilled job-seekers and people with other disadvantages will have little chance of reaching the front of the queue. The jobs for which they were previously eligible are no longer accessible to them.

In the same way as the technology and international trade hypotheses, the empirical status of the substitution and displacement hypotheses are far from uniformly established. Substitution apparently occurs because the low-skilled are, relatively speaking, too expensive. On the less regulated labour markets of the United States and the United Kingdom, the wage differential between skilled and unskilled employees has increased as a result of the reduced demand for low-skilled labour. The US is even experiencing a real decline in wages for low-skilled jobs, which reinforced the phenomenon of the working poor. In most continental Western European economies, the labour market is more regulated and wage base determination is more rigid, to the extent that a quantity adjustment (increased unemployment among the low-skilled) rather than a price adjustment was observed there (OECD, 1994a; Jackman, 1994). In this sense, the substitution effect could indeed be at work as a result of the excessively high relative price of low-skilled labour. However, this does not explain why the demand for low-skilled labour fell in the first place.

This can, however, be explained by the displacement hypothesis. The increase in what is known as overschooling is sometimes referred to as a reason for the increased importance of displacement. Overschooling exists when an employee has higher qualifications that those which are strictly necessary for the job he is doing. It can be observed that the occurrence of overschooling has increased over time in European countries for which information is available (the Netherlands 1960-1995, Spain 1983-1990 and Portugal 1982-1992), while the occurrence of underschooling is falling (Hartog, 1997). As already stated, this increase in overschooling does offer one explanation for increased displacement, but overschooling itself can also be attributed to other phenomena, such as the fact that the low-skilled are relatively over-expensive, or because the value of diplomas and formal qualifications has changed over time (De Beer, 1996).

The question of the cause of the poorer position of low-skilled job-seekers and, by extension, of all those in a weak position on the labour market, is not without importance in policy terms. If technological evolution were unequivocally designated a prime cause, this would immediately be a strong argument for advocating (vocational) training as the ideal tool to improve the weak groups' chances of finding work. If, on the other hand, the substitution and displacement effects are also involved, things are much more complicated. Training will probably not be enough to achieve a permanent solution. With respect to the problem of the excessive wage costs of the low-skilled, we can think for example of plans which involve subsidising wage costs in one way or another. This subsidising can be temporary, if the employee eventually reaches a productivity level - through experience and on-the-job training, possibly supplemented by more formal training - which corresponds to the going wage. However, certain categories of job-seekers have such an accumulation of handicaps that they will not reach the expected productivity level on time and this is a situation which cannot be ruled out. If these job-seekers are also to be offered the genuine prospect of work, other solutions will be needed.

Strictly speaking, the displacement hypothesis does not involve a training shortage. The main problem here is, after all, that a shortage of jobs exists on the level of the overall labour market. An active labour market policy, including tools such as training, is first and foremost geared towards activating supply. For theoretical reasons, it can however be expected that an active labour market policy will exert a positive influence on the demand side. By increasing the potential and the effectiveness of the unemployed population, inflationary tensions on the labour market can be avoided, which will benefit demand in the long term. Nonetheless, it seems that pursuing an active labour market policy will not be enough on its own. Additional efforts are required on the demand side. However, it is as yet far from clear what form these efforts can take, given the pan-European desire for a balanced budget. A good deal of pessimism therefore exists with respect to the possibilities of demand management (see Bean, 1997).

1.3 Low-skilled job-seekers and their ineffective search for work

In addition to developments and mechanisms which mean that the demand for low-skilled labour is insufficient, a number of mechanisms also have the effect of obstructing the supply of labour, particularly among job-seekers who depend on replacement incomes, such as unemployment and disability benefits. We can talk here of the *unemployment trap* and the *poverty trap* (OECD, 1996b). The unemployment trap occurs when the benefit received (e.g. unemployment benefit) is relatively high compared to expected earnings from work. In that case, a job-seeker may not always be motivated to look actively for work. What is important in this mechanism is the extent of the replacement rate; this indicates the relationship between the benefit received and the income before unemployment. In most Western European countries, the gross replacement rates[2] are 30-40%, which does not point directly to major disincentives. However, when we take taxes (or precisely the fact that benefits are not taxed, as is the case in Belgium and Germany), social security contributions, child benefits, housing benefits, etc., into account to achieve net replacement rates, much higher rates can be recorded in some countries (up to 80 or 90%). Moreover, the effective unemployment trap can be much greater in certain cases, because a number of additional expenses can be involved in the transition from non-working to working, relating to transport, clothing and childcare, which affect weaker groups disproportionately heavily since they have a low expected income when they make the transition to work (OECD, 1996b). We cannot therefore rule out the idea that the unemployment trap is particularly relevant for the weaker groups studied in this report. This certainly applies in countries where no link exists between unemployment benefits and previous earnings (e.g. Ireland) or where benefits are subject to a minimum level (e.g. Belgium and France). Finding a solution to this problem is not easy because reducing the benefit level will lead almost inevitably to an increase in poverty.

The poverty trap occurs when extra effort on the part of a job-seeker does not produce or barely produces an increase in his disposable income, as a result of the combined effect of the tax system and the loss or reduction of a benefit. This mechanism is particularly relevant to people with a low income-earning capacity who do not manage to get a full-time job. By accepting a job which is not full-time, they will lose out financially which means that this option is not attractive and usually even impossible for them. If benefits are dependent on means testing, entire families can sometimes be caught in the poverty trap, because both partners have to find a job at the same time if they are not to lose out (OECD, 1996b).

1.4 Inadequate upward mobility via continued education and training

It is evident from the above that the labour market position of the low-skilled and other disadvantaged groups is fairly weak. This position is further undermined by the fact that many labour market measures, including many training provisions, are insufficiently geared towards weak target groups or that the weak target groups cannot/do not make sufficient use of these provisions. Various explanations can account for the under-representation of disadvantaged persons in training provisions.

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[2] An average of replacement rates calculated by the OECD for two income levels, three family types and three lengths of unemployment.

1.4.1 Legal, administrative and institutional barriers

It has already been pointed out in the introduction that the borders of the labour market are not always clearly defined. For historical or administrative reasons, certain groups are not regarded as unemployed; sometimes, in order to massage the unemployment statistics, entire groups are left out of official unemployment figures. Those who neither work nor are unemployed are then regarded as being outside the labour market.

Nevertheless, labour market status is of considerable importance. Thus, many mainstream labour market programmes (wage subsidy schemes, enterprise allowance schemes, training, etc.) are explicitly aimed at those registered as unemployed, in some cases even at the remunerated unemployed. Those classified as "outside the labour market" are therefore not usually even eligible for participation (or can only participate as an exception to the rule). In addition, those whose status is unclear cannot (automatically) use the services of the Public Employment Service (PES) and therefore receive no job offers or other counselling offers. In the case of the weak groups, this is particularly distressing. For disadvantaged persons, taking the initiative in going to the PES is not always easy because of psychological and other barriers, while they are perhaps precisely those who most need help and advice in looking for work (partly because their low level of training and, sometimes, functional illiteracy can severely limit the number of channels these people can use to look for work).

Unemployment as a condition for participation is also a serious obstacle for the so-called marginal workers, who are those who may have jobs, but these are jobs with seriously unreliable employment contracts, unskilled or part-time jobs. These people are also at risk from being caught up in this circuit because they are not able to improve their position, for example through training. In addition, a certain minimum length of unemployment is sometimes used as an entry criterion. Thus, in the UK, accessibility to labour market programmes is typically linked to a certain minimum length of unemployment (e.g. 6 months for the Training for Work scheme). It can sometimes be impossible for people whose career consists of a string of temporary jobs to overcome these barriers.

1.4.2 Creaming of candidates

The search for work by some disadvantaged persons is partially hindered by the fact that employers have prejudices against certain characteristics, such as increased age, ethnic origin, handicaps and length of unemployment. This reticence on the part of employers may not always be based entirely on prejudices, in the sense, for example, that older job-seekers are on average less flexible, recruiting handicapped people can require additional effort and that the long-term unemployed can initially experience adjustment problems or can have lost some skills as a result of their extended absence from the labour market. The same mixture of prejudices and objective opposition can sometimes mean that programme organisers, often implicitly, prefer the "stronger" job-seekers over those who have a "weak" score for the characteristics mentioned.

At first sight, the training establishments concerned have strong arguments to justify their creaming behaviour; for example, they claim that all unemployed people have the right to obtain assistance in finding work, including those who are better placed. Moreover, training providers want to maximise their creditworthiness with employers - employers who after all select the best job-seekers, and so on (Verdié and Sibille, 1992). The government is also placing increasing emphasis on "effectiveness" and, particularly, on the use of employment ratios after the completion of training as a measure of output, a yardstick of quality or even as a basis for funding.

Some state that we simply have to learn to live with the trade-off between effectiveness and equity, arguing that it makes no sense to operate an adverse selection system and only provide training to the poorer candidates. Anderson et al. (1993) illustrate the apparent trade-off by showing that the 71% placement rate of JTPA trainees[3] in Tennessee would fall by one quarter if the programme were reoriented to target only the least educated job-seekers.

Nonetheless, the conceptual basis of this view remains questionable, because the added value of training programmes cannot be measured in terms of simple placement ratios. After all, such placement ratios measure not only the possible effect of training but also the effect of all manner of antecedents which have nothing to do with the training effect as such. The fact that characteristics such as youth, short-term unemployment, male gender, higher preliminary education, common nationality, good health, normal social security status, etc., raise an individual's employability in addition to training, does not imply that these characteristics improve his or her "trainability".

Given that it is difficult to measure the direct output of training programmes, the use of differential placement figures (the difference in placement ratios between candidates with identical characteristics, who have and have not been trained) would in any event be a more correct (although still indirect) criterion. It is crucial, in the light of this corrected criterion, to examine empirically whether vocational training for job-seekers is relatively more efficient or less efficient for disadvantaged groups among the unemployed.

1.4.3 Motivation to participate

It is sometimes alleged that the under-representation of disadvantaged persons in the various training measures can be attributed to the fact that it is harder to mobilise these groups to participate. It is therefore also important to examine what the possible explanations could be for this lack of motivation, so that when target group-oriented initiatives are set up this can be taken into account in as far as possible. This is not only important with a view to raising participation, but research also indicates that working with motivated participants leads to greatly improved results (Aakrog, 1991).

In order to explain the fact that, paradoxically, the weaker groups are less motivated to take part in training initiatives, researchers and practicians have formulated the following hypotheses (Nicaise et al., 1995):

- *Risky investment*

  Participation in training has the character of a investment with certainty about costs, but high uncertainty about potential benefits. Firstly, following training can imply a number of direct costs, such as the costs of transport, childcare, teaching materials, etc.. In addition, following training can postpone the job search activity and thus lead to an extension of the expected duration of inactivity in the short term. By contrast, the benefits of training ex ante are by no means certain. The evaluation of a training project for low-skilled long-term unemployed people in Belgium revealed that the chance to find employment after 6 months was 40% for participants, compared to 20% for non-participants. Although this is in itself a positive result, the fact remains that the majority of participants did not find a job (Bollens and Hooge, 1996). Policy-makers should acknowledge that neither the direct material costs nor the indirect costs can be borne by disadvantaged persons, in other words, adequate remuneration of participants seems to be an essential condition for success. In practice, therefore, a great many training provisions envisage a reimbursement of the direct costs and/or a supplement over and above the benefit for the duration of the training. In addition, bonuses are sometimes allocated in the calculated duration of unemployment by, for example, excluding the duration of the training as a period of unemployment, or by making any further right to benefit dependent upon participation.

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[3] JTPA is the Job Training Partnership Act, a major training programme for economically disadvantaged groups in the US.

- *Fear of failure and other psychological barriers*

  Some people have a negative school career behind them and fear of failing again can inhibit their participation. The best way of overcoming this situation is to make sure that training courses build on qualifications and encourage self-confidence among the unemployed. Negative experiences in the past also explain why some have an aversion to going back into a "school" situation. In addition, a number of other psychological problems also stand in the way of participation (James, 1993). Obstacles such as negative self-image, fear of failure, the threat of exclusion, fatalism, etc., should be removed by linking provisions to social assistance in a holistic approach. Also, positive support seems to be a better incentive than pressure and sanctions.

- *Training is not given priority*

  Some of the most disadvantaged unemployed people (who are older, totally unskilled or long-term unemployed) are less keen to participate in training than the average job-seeker. They want a job and regard training as a superfluous or even unacceptable obstacle in their search for work. This can be the case, for example, when the expected return to training is rather low, for example, for reasons of age or former failure at school, or when the financial need is so urgent that it does not allow for postponed income. For them, training is not necessarily the best strategy to start with; direct employment seems to be a better response in the short term, possibly supplemented by training in a subsequent stage (Wagner, 1990; Lynn, 1992; Chérain and Demazière, 1992). This justifies the strategy of many local employment initiatives, sometimes called "social economy or third sector projects", which give priority to (non-profit) employment over training.

- *Non-correspondence of training to needs and aspirations of disadvantaged groups*

  Participation in many types of vocational training depends on the level of qualification already attained. Job-seekers with low or no skills applying to follow specific vocational training are likely to be turned down because of their lack of qualifications, or to be referred on to training at a lower level (or to pre-vocational training). Even if they are turned down on the basis of objective criteria, this can lead to frustration and to a lack of motivation.

- *Disenchantment effect*

  For some time now, most Western European countries have been investing heavily in training for job-seekers. This implies that a growing group of unemployed people exists who have already followed training in the past but who, despite high expectations, have not immediately found work. These people may then become disenchanted with the training strategy and no longer be prepared to make a fresh attempt.

In order to break the impasse regarding the disproportionate participation of disadvantaged groups, participation could be made compulsory. Thus, in some countries, the right to benefit is made dependent upon participation in training or another pro-active tool after a certain period of unemployment. In as far as this compulsion also implies the right to an offer of training, such a scheme can indeed contribute to helping even the most disadvantaged persons gain access to training provisions. One important condition is that the (compulsory) demand for training can also be adequately met, in other words, sufficient training places must be available. After all, if rationing is implemented, the likelihood is high that the most disadvantaged groups will be pushed overboard. Moreover, making training compulsory can mean an influx of poorly motivated candidates, which does not increase the chances of success. This latter objection is perhaps less applicable if training is not the only escape route, but other options such as work experience, job clubs, etc., are also offered.

2. CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES

2.1 Measuring the extent to which disadvantaged groups are reached

Disadvantaged groups are, as a consequence of a number of selection and self-selection processes, seriously under-represented in many training provisions. The question arises here as to how this level of under-representation can best be recorded. One frequently-used approach is to examine one by one a number of characteristics regarded as relevant to find out the extent to which they occur in the target population, so that the extent to which they occur within the population which was reached by the training in question can then be examined. In this way, an idea can be built up of the extent to which, for example, the long-term unemployed or immigrants are under-represented.

This type of univariate approach can certainly provide interesting insights. However, where an accumulation of disadvantages are present, i.e. where people score simultaneously "low" for various characteristics (e.g. low-skilled long-term unemployed immigrants), this type of univariate analysis comes unstuck; after all, it does not enable anything to be said about the most disadvantaged groups. When analysing the range of training provisions it is therefore a good idea to use a multivariate approach, which can take account of the extent to which various characteristics interact to affect the chance of participation. In addition, the problems of a univariate versus a multivariate measuring instrument do not relate solely to correctly measuring and illustrating the extent of under-representation, but can also have practical repercussions. Thus, a subsidising body concerned to reduce creaming-off behaviour can start imposing certain quotas or standards on the provision of training with respect to reaching disadvantaged groups. If these quotas are imposed in univariate terms, the likelihood is high that the most disadvantaged groups, which have an accumulation of various disadvantages, will still not be reached.

2.2 Measuring the impact of training measures

The final objective of training measures within the context of a labour market policy is to further the labour market position of participants. Measuring the extent to which this objective is achieved is, however, easier said than done. Without wanting to examine all the aspects linked to the economic evaluation of the labour market effects of training provisions, it nonetheless seems necessary to explain a number of elements in some detail:

- *The impact of training on the subsequent labour market situation of the individual*

  Two major approaches are used for measuring the impact of training on job-seekers. The first approach, used chiefly in the US, examines whether changes can be observed in the income situation of participants after participation. The second approach, which is used both in the US and in Europe, examines whether any change takes place in the labour market status of participants after the training and, more especially, whether the participants find work after the training, or remain unemployed or achieve a different status (e.g. continuing education). Subsequently, it is them possible to examine the quality of the employment found (full-time or not, temporary or not, remuneration, etc.) and the extent to which the effect is lasting (do people remain in work? etc.).

- *Controlling for the counterfactual case*

  The gross effect of training, such as the percentage of participants finding work after training in the case of training for the unemployed, is not a correct yardstick of its impact. After all, a certain percentage of this group would have found work without the training. The impact is therefore measured as the difference between this latter percentage (the counterfactual) and the percentage actually observed. The way in which an estimate of the counterfactual can be achieved is probably the most hotly-disputed question in the world of evaluation. One approach is concerned with the random assignment approach, what is known as the experimental design. This involves randomly dividing into two the group of people coming forward to take part in the training. The first group, the treatment group, is allowed to follow the training; the second group - the control group - is excluded. The labour market results for this control group are then used as an estimate of the counterfactual. A second approach, the quasi-experimental approach, involves compiling a group of people, usually ex post, who have not followed training but who are as similar as possible in other respects to the group of people who have received training. In this case, the results of the comparison group are used as an estimate for the counterfactual case.[4]

- *Net effectiveness*

  The impact of the training, measured in this way, can then be regarded as the net effectiveness of the measure.[5] The gross effect (e.g. total percentage of unemployed people who find work after the training) is typically higher the more favourable the background characteristics are, while this is not always the case for the net effect.

Even if participation in training increases the chances of an individual job-seeker, it is not yet clear whether training changes the chances of the unemployed as a group in any way. One frequently voiced criticism is, after all, that training does not achieve much more than a redistribution of chances on the labour market. This is more formally presented using the following concepts:

- Substitution *effect*: a job-seeker finds work as a result of following training but, in so doing, he takes the place which would have been occupied by another job-seeker if the training had not been followed. There is therefore no net increase in employment;
- Deadweight *loss*: a trained job-seeker is recruited but the same person would also have been recruited even in the absence of a training.

The macro-economic impact of training (for disadvantaged groups or for the modal unemployed) is often defined as the gross employment ratio after participation, reduced by the deadweight and substitution effects. However, this presentation of the facts remains a problem because it paints only a partial picture of reality. Firstly, not only are there "leaks", but the training may also have positive indirect effects on employment (e.g. if training solves bottlenecks in a sub-segment of the labour market). Secondly, we should not concentrate too much on the employment effect alone. Under normal circumstances, training will also contribute towards increased productivity, lower inflation, higher wages, company growth and may possibly even have feedback effects on the government budget. If all these other effects are to be included in evaluating training, we believe that social cost/benefit analysis is a more appropriate method. This starts with a global model in which the mutual relationships between all these variables are defined. In extreme cases, it is even conceivable that vocational training does not create jobs for the unskilled on balance, but is nevertheless efficient and profitable.

The other effects of training (in addition to employment) are indeed sometimes difficult to measure.

3. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Accessibility of the provisions

In analysing the population which participates in mainstream labour market programmes aimed at reintegrating job-seekers into the labour market, an over-representation is typically observed of younger, native, male, short-term unemployed and more highly-skilled job-seekers, in other words those job-seekers who thus already have a better starting position than the weaker groups. However, even within programmes which are specifically aimed at certain target groups (such as the long-term unemployed) the same phenomenon occurs; here too it will usually be observed that within the confines of the target group description, the least disadvantaged participate the most (in the example of a programme aimed at the long-term unemployed, where the line is drawn at 12 months unemployment, the very long-term unemployed (longer than 24 months) will typically be seriously under-represented). Examples of this can be found in, for example, McGinnity, 1996; Serrano and Tohario, 1992; Verdié and Sibille, 1992; Schöman, 1993; Anderson et al, 1993; Nicaise et al, 1995b.

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[4] Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. Thus, in a quasi-experimental approach it is possible for the comparison group to be relatively similar to the participant group in terms of observable characteristics, but not in terms of non-observable characteristics, such as motivation. This can lead to selection bias. This problem is less likely in a random assignment experiment, but this does involve other problems.

[5] This concept is also sometimes used in another meaning, specifically as the impact of the measure after correction for macro-economic effects, such as the substitution and deadweight effects.

The possible explanations for these observations have already been listed in section 1.4: legal, administrative and institutional barriers which by definition exclude certain groups from the programme; the selection behaviour of the programme organisers; elements such as motivation and possible material and financial barriers which prevent participation and the unsuitability of the training supply for the needs of the weakest groups.

Increasing numbers of the unemployed are regarded as being outside the labour market. For example, this used to be the case, until recently, for single parents in the UK, it still is for long-term unemployed classed as "disabled" in the Netherlands and older unemployed people in Belgium and France. Official registration as unemployed is usually closely associated with receipt of unemployment benefits. The consequences of this are that, in some countries, a wide discrepancy arises between the group of officially registered unemployed people and the group of those actually looking for work. For example, in the UK the official unemployment figure is a straightforward count of the number of people receiving unemployment benefit or income support because they are unemployed. However, if this official figure is compared with estimates based on the definition of unemployment by the International Labour Organisation, considerable differences emerge. This means that, for the period 1984 to 1991, the number of job-seekers not officially registered as unemployed would have amounted to an average of 841,000 (Lawlor and Kennedy, 1992). Moreover, the ILO definition is still relatively strict in describing what can be understood by unemployment. According to the EPI, expanding this definition on the one hand to include discouraged workers and, on the other hand, to people who want to work but are not actively seeking work, would increase the number of unemployed people in the UK, which stood at 2.3 million in the winter of 1995 according to the Labour Force Survey, to 4.3 million (EPI, 1996). Other countries also have problems with non-registered unemployment (see, for example, Karr, 1997 for Germany, Hoffman, 1997 for the Netherlands and Wells, 1996 and Convery, 1996 for the UK).

The position and the labour market status of the minimum income recipients is usually ambiguous. Thus, in Belgium, willingness to work is a condition for receipt of this support. Consequently, applicants must officially register themselves as job-seekers. In order not to "needlessly" inflate the unemployment figures, their registrations are regularly removed from the figures so that, in practice, fewer than 20% of the minimum income recipients can be found among the officially unemployed. The minimum income recipients are recognised explicitly as a target group in many Belgian labour market programmes but, in view of their removal from the registers, they are in fact excluded again. Similar or other mechanisms in a number of other countries also seem to be a serious obstacle to accessibility to labour market programmes by minimum income recipients (Nicaise et al, 1994).

3.2 The effectiveness of training for risk groups

Below we examine what can be said on the basis of the literature about the effectiveness of education and training as a strategy for reintegrating disadvantaged persons. Here, the term "effectiveness" is used in its narrow sense and we only look at the impact of following training on the subsequent labour market position of a participant. After all, promoting the employment chances of participants is the ultimate objective of vocational training within the framework of a labour market policy and most evaluation studies are primarily geared towards this aspect. Of course, this does not rule out the fact that following training can also have other objectives and effects, such as increasing self-confidence.

3.2.1 Effects at participant level[6]

3.2.1.1 Denmark

Westergård-Nielsen (1993b, as quoted in Pedersen and Westergård-Nielsen, 1993a) observes that training for the long-term unemployed leads to an increase in their unemployment the following year. The author refers to the sometimes dubious quality of the training and the possible lack of motivation as an explanation for this result. The Danish Job Offer system, in use until 1994, indeed involved compulsory participation for the long-term unemployed, which does not exactly provide an incentive.

Another evaluation of the Job Offer system (Rosholm, 1994, as quoted in Fay, 1996) also reveals that the training options had a negative or insignificant impact on the chance of escaping from unemployment for most groups. A negative effect was observed for all men and women over 50, sometimes a positive effect was recorded for men under 50. However, training was successful for women under 50.

3.2.1.2 Norway

Raaum and Torp (1996) record a positive effect on earnings after following training which is primarily aimed at unemployed job-seekers. Despite the application of various model specifications, a number of problems still remain, so that the authors see the results as inconclusive. Individual analyses for sub-groups demonstrate that the impact of training on earnings is greater for adults than for young people, is higher for participants with a low level of education and increases with the duration of unemployment before the training.[7]

3.2.1.3 UK

An evaluation of the YTS (Dolton et al, 1993) observes that participants, as opposed to non-participants, find work less quickly, even when the duration of the training is not taken into consideration. However, the YTS does seem to increase the chances of female participants obtaining a "good" job. This does not apply to male participants.

Payne et al (1996, as quoted in Fay, 1996) evaluate Employment Training, which is aimed at the unemployed. They note a "representative" person in ET worked approximately 9.5 months during the follow-up period (January 1993 to January 1995, i.e. 25 months), as opposed to 7.5 months in the comparison group. Furthermore, it appeared that project placements had little effect, unless they lasted a long time; by contrast, employer placements (combined with training) were effective.

3.2.1.4 The Netherlands

In an evaluation of the Vocational Training Centre, a training facility aimed at younger job-seekers, long-term unemployed people over 25 and those re-entering the labour market, de Koning *et al* (1990) conclude that participants find work more quickly than non-participants. They also point out the importance of the content of the training.

As well as the Vocational Training Centre, Van der Burgh and Bavinck (1995) also study the KRS training (aimed at unemployed people who are difficult to employ). The authors reach the conclusion that the relatively underprivileged unemployed people (the long-term unemployed) have the most to gain from participating in the training in terms of net effectiveness. This result is, however, qualified in the sense that the proportion of this group within the measure is very limited. Moreover, it appears that the training has little effect among immigrants.

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[6] The following summary is based, on the one hand, on a number of studies which were directly available to us and, on the other hand, on a number of other studies which themselves provide summaries of evaluation studies. For this reason, the basic reference will first be given for each individual evaluation and, if the study is only known to us through the secondary source, reference will then be made to it.

[7] The two latter effects do not apply for training where a form of random assignment was applied by the programme organiser. The latter applies to approximately one quarter of applicants.

The study by den Boer (1995) on Primary Vocational Adult Education establishes that training helps the low-skilled participants. After nine months, 68% of participants have a job, compared to 57% of the comparison group. No effect could be observed of the duration of the training.

Table 1 shows a number of results from Gravesteijn-Ligthelm et al 1995) with respect to the evaluation of vocational training for younger job-seekers and the long-term unemployed. These show that the net effectiveness of the training decreases at higher levels of education, is negative for the short-term unemployed and is significantly positive for the long-term unemployed. A negative impact is recorded for immigrant participants. A major positive effect is recorded for participants over the age of 35.

Table 1:

Employment chances by characteristics for participants and comparison group (in %)

Characteristic	*Participants*	*Comparison group*	*Increased chances*
Sex			
Male	58	45	13
Female	59	55	4
Age			
Up to 25	63	60	3
25 to 35	54	56	2
over 36	60	37	23
Level of education			
Unskilled	41	26	15
LBO/MAVO*	60	52	8
MBO/HAVO/VWO**	61	60	1
HBO/WO***	70	67	3
Ethnic origin			
Dutch	65	53	12
Non-Dutch	37	47	-10
Duration of unemployment			
Less than 1 year	57	73	-16
1-2 years	61	33	28
2-3 years	65	52	13
3-6 years	62	48	14
6 or more years	47	34	13
Total	58	51	7
Number of people	661	811	

Source: Gravesteijn-Ligthelm et al (1995)

* LBO/MAVO = lower secondary vocational education/lower general secondary education

** MBO/HAVO/VWO = upper secondary vocational education/upper general secondary education/pre-university education

*** HBO/WO = higher professional education/university education

3.2.1.5 Sweden

A study of vocational training which ended in 1981 (Axelsson, 1989, as quoted in Björklund, 1993) establishes a significant impact on earnings. Moreover, the effect was greater on foreign participants than on natives, greater for women than for men, greater for handicapped people than for others and greater for those lacking previous vocational training. By contrast, Andersson, 1993 (as quoted in Björklund, 1993) observes that training had no significant effect or even a negative impact on the earnings of cohorts from 1989 and 1990. This striking difference compared to Axelsson's results could have something to do with the fact that, at the end of the 1980s, participation in training could be used to requalify for benefits, which was not yet the case at the beginning of the 1980s.

3.2.1.6 France

Two studies (Ministry of Employment, etc., 1995; Tuchszirer et al, 1993, as quoted by Perker, 1996) evaluate Crédit-Formation Individualisé (CFI - Individualised Credit Training), which was aimed at young people without qualifications. By the end of the CFI, 29% of participants had received a full diploma, after one year 42% were working and 43% had still not found work. The Contrats de Retour à l'Emploi (Back To Work Contracts) are aimed at unemployed people who have been out of work for longer than 3 years or who are over 50, as well as at minimum income recipients. After 18 months, 60% appear to be working.

3.2.1.7 Spain

Saez and Toledo (1995) also observe that vocational training significantly increases the chances of the unemployed finding work. A division into training level demonstrates that the level of employment for unskilled participants, compared to unskilled non-participants, is 7.8 points higher. For the low-skilled (primary education from 6 to 14 years or first level technical training) the difference compared to non-participants is 16.6 points. As the level of training increases still further, this difference falls again from 13.9 and 9.1 to 7.9 for secondary school/second level technical training, first level graduates and higher level graduates respectively.

3.2.1.8 Ireland

An analysis of Foundation Training (basic training in general skills for those with poor educational qualifications, those re-entering the labour market and older, long-term unemployed men) and the Specific Skills Training programmes, amongst others, reveals a level of employment after 2 months and after 18 months of 0.31 and 0.34 for Foundation Training and 0.57 and 0.60 for Specific Skills Training respectively (O'Connell, 1996). A comparison with non-participants, which is however restricted to participants and non-participants below the age of 23, establishes a short-term positive effect for the Foundation Training on employment chances, but not in the long term. The effect of the Specific Skills Training is positive in both the short and the long term.

3.2.1.9 Germany (West)

A study of vocational training for the unemployed (Hofbauer and Dadzio, 1987) shows that, two years after the end of the training, 56% of participants are working, compared to 41% in the comparison group. If these results are divided up according to the background characteristics of the participants (level of training, age and duration of unemployment before the training), as expected, the gross employment figures after two years prove to be lower, the more limiting characteristics a participant has (see Table 2). The net effects, on the other hand, point to a positive effect on the weaker groups (see Table 2). Furthermore, it is observed that training which lasts longer has a higher net effect, both for the weaker participants and for those in a stronger starting position.

Table 2:

Proportion working after two years (in %)

Low-skilled (1)	*45+* (2)	*Long-term unemployed* (3)	*Participants* (4)	*Comparison group* (5)	*Difference* (6)	*as % of (5)* (7)
yes	yes	yes	25	17	8	47
no	yes	yes	36	28	8	29
yes	no	yes	40	23	17	74
yes	yes	no	43	34	9	26
no	no	yes	49	39	10	26
no	yes	no	51	42	9	21
yes	no	no	56	38	18	47
no	no	no	64	52	12	23
Total			56	41	15	37

(1) Without secondary school leaving certificate or without completed initial vocational training or former unskilled or semi-skilled labourer.

Source: Hofbauer and Dadzio, 1987

3.2.1.10 Belgium

Bollens and Hooge (1996) evaluated vocational training for unemployed participants. They noted that, 12 months after completing the training, approximately 75% of participants were working, compared to 45% in the comparison group. This difference still exists three years after the training. The figures for a pre-vocational training measure, aimed at low-skilled long-term unemployed people, amount to 49% and 27% respectively. If these are divided into sub-groups, we see that net effectiveness increases with duration of unemployment and decreases with the level of education.

3.2.1.11 Canada

Trican Consulting Group et al (1993, as quoted in Fay, 1996) studied the "Severely Employment Disadvantaged" option within the broader Job Entry and Job Development Programme. They observed that both men and women benefited from this programme which offered various services, including training, counselling and placement. The benefits related both to earnings and to employment.

We cannot draw any hard and fast conclusions from this summary. We must not lose sight of the fact that the actual training itself is regarded as a black box in most of the evaluations. The diversity of results conceals just as wide a variety (if not a wider variety) of different training types and contents, training durations and differences in the population reached, as well as the obvious differences in labour market conditions between the various countries.

As can be expected for theoretical reasons, the gross employment chance also seems to be lower after training the more disadvantages a participant accumulates. However, the studies which make a distinction into various sub-groups reveal on several occasions that the net effectiveness of the training measure is greater among participants who are in a weaker position on the labour market (low-skilled, long-term unemployed, women). However, we cannot entirely rule out the notion that a selection bias effect is at play up to a certain level: knowing that those with disadvantages are less motivated and in general have less opportunity for taking part in training than those in a strong position, the possibility exists that those from the former group which can be reached are precisely those who are additionally motivated. Nonetheless, the obvious greater net effectiveness for weak participants remains an interesting fact. It is worth pointing out here that a similar observation is reported for the US in Bassi and Ashenfelter (1986), Bell and Orr (1988), Haverman and Hollister (1991) and Gueron and Pauly (1991).

3.2.2 Macro-economic impact

It is clear that the net employment effect of training programmes diminishes as deadweight and substitution increase. Selective measures targeted at disadvantaged groups are generally thought to cause relatively fewer deadweight losses than general measures, for various reasons (Bassi and Ashenfelter, 1986; OECD, 1993):

- the measures will automatically concern the more labour-intensive branches of the economy, where more poorly qualified workers are employed;
- the value-added of training is potentially more substantial for the low-skilled than for skilled job-seekers;
- employers are relatively less inclined to recruit disadvantaged workers without government intervention, compared to high productive workers.

On the other hand, it may be argued that the substitution effects of targeted training programmes are greater because of the greater competition (between more or less skilled job-seekers) for the jobs at the bottom of the job distribution pile. High substitution effects can be defended from the point of view of justice as well as from the point of view of efficiency, provided disadvantaged groups with few prospects of work as a result of the labour market programme take the place of more highly skilled job-seekers who are in a stronger starting position. In practice, however, substitution will also occur within the group of disadvantaged persons. Thus, as a result of the sometimes poorly coordinated growth in initiatives for various target groups, substitution can occur within and between target groups, which seems less desirable.

Deadweight and substitution effects are extremely difficult to estimate empirically. Estimates can be made either via macro-econometric studies that include - as well as the number of beneficiaries of the programmes concerned - all the other relevant context variables (growth in GDP, wages, flows of vacancies, etc.), or via surveys among employers. Although the latter are less sophisticated from a theoretical and methodological point of view, they sometimes yield more reliable results. A noteworthy example relating to disadvantaged groups is the study by Ameels, Lopez-Novella and Van Der Linden (1994), who interviewed a stratified sample of 400 employers, selected on the basis of their recent experience with labour market measures for disadvantaged groups (LTU, poorly qualified young people, minimum income recipients, women re-entering the labour market and handicapped people). They found deadweight effects of 55% for recruitment subsidies and of 34% for training measures; substitution effects were estimated at 30% for recruitment subsidies, compared to only 9% for training. The lower estimates for training appear to be consistent with other studies (Bassi and Ashenfelter, 1986; OECD, 1993). However, it should be noted that the effects of training also depend on post-training placement probabilities, whereas recruitment subsidies are by definition linked to placement.

3.3 Towards increased effectiveness of training initiatives

Below we examine whether certain elements relating to the design, content and framework of training can contribute to increased effectiveness.

3.3.1 Target group orientation

Training courses will not be effective if they fail to build on the capabilities, level of existing knowledge and confidence level of the unemployed to whom they apply. If the level of a course is too low, the result may be demotivation and perhaps, subsequently, drop-out. If the level is too high, the provision is simply a waste of resources. One shortcoming of many training schemes is that they are too short for groups who lack elementary skills, such as literacy and numeracy, or basic work attitudes. Alternatively, in some cases, pre-qualifying courses exist but are not linked to subsequent stages of training, so the process stops half-way.

Paradoxically, labour market provisions for the weaker groups of unemployed people appear usually to be shorter than those which are used by stronger groups (Nicaise et al, 1995). On the other hand, a drop-out problem can arise when relatively long-term training is offered. For this reason, a great deal of attention must be devoted to the correct ratio of forms of work when provisions are drawn up for these groups (see further: design of training) as well as to long-term socio-psychological support.

3.3.2 Certification

Vocational training, particularly when it is relatively long-term, should give rise to a formal qualification (Fay, 1996). In an evaluation of Employment Training in the UK (Payne et al, 1996), the award (or not) of a formal qualification was isolated as one of the factors which influenced whether or not work was found. The same was reported by Raaum et al (1995).

3.3.3 Labour market orientation

Training programmes should take into account the needs and specific problems of the population they serve. However, if the intention is also for the training to lead to a significantly increased chance of finding work, it is at least just as important that the skills acquired correspond to the needs of the labour market. These two objectives can conflict with one another. Some authors even speak of a dilemma (Erhel et al, 1996). The more the programme designers take account of demand from the labour market, the more creaming will take place, while a choice in favour of weaker target groups again means that concessions must be made on the level of the labour market relevance of the training offered. However, is this conflict really necessary? The characteristics of certain target groups, such as limited learning capacity (especially among the mentally handicapped, but also among other categories to a certain extent) and the lack of basic skills do of course fix an upper limit on the possibilities. Nonetheless, one may sometimes wonder whether training projects for disadvantaged persons could not sometimes be more ambitious. It is already clear that neither society nor the unemployed participants benefit from training in skills for which ultimately no demand exists. However, an efficiency problem does of course arise in aiming at more labour market-relevant training for the weaker groups. After all, the aforementioned dilemma occurs precisely because the more highly trained job-seekers can be trained more quickly, immediately and therefore cheaply than weaker groups, who usually first have to complete pre-vocational training before any kind of vocational training can be given. The time taken to complete this journey also poses problems because the surpluses and shortages of certain vocational qualifications on the local labour market can sometimes change in the short term, so that labour market-oriented training must be able to anticipate emerging shortages quickly and flexibly.

This latter problem is just one of the many difficulties which arise in predicting the qualifications needs of the labour market. Some authors are even claiming that many government training programmes are not suitable for satisfying business needs as a result of inevitable standardisation and excessively limited supply, to the extent that the training subsidies can best be provided to the companies themselves, which can tailor the training as closely as possible to the available jobs (Snower, 1997). Although this may be a somewhat extreme position, the fact remains that predicting qualifications needs is very difficult terrain where, despite the increasing amount of literature (Boydell and Leary, 1996; Commissariat général du Plan, 1996), much work still remains to be done. This all points to the need for good consultation between the labour market actors who have an idea of potential needs, such as the PES, employers and employee organisations (Fay, 1996).

It has been repeatedly pointed out above that training is not the most appropriate strategy for all disadvantaged persons and that some will probably gain more from direct employment measures. Given the failure of Keynesian demand stimulation and the budgetary impossibility of creating mass employment in the state sector, however, a new interpretation will have to be found for the concept of direct employment. However, even for the group of job-seekers who in principle can benefit from following training, one inevitably comes up against the limitations of the training strategy within the current labour market situation. Undiminished investment in training remains necessary but, in view of the usually low gross effectiveness and potentially high substitution and deadweight effects, will not be in a position to lift the entire group of disadvantaged persons out of unemployment.

These observations have led to increasing attention being turned, in recent years, to the development of new employment opportunities for low-skilled and disadvantaged persons. The limit conditions are clear (Drèze and Sneessens, 1997; Pacolet, 1997):

- employment must make economic sense; activities must be sought for which demand exists, but which is not demanded at current market prices and is therefore supplied in tiny amounts, if at all;
- technological development and competition from low-wage countries further restricts choice;[8]
- the intervention and subsidy possibilities of the government are limited or non-existent.

A range of activities for which unsatisfied demand exists and which are relatively unthreatened by machines or foreign workers is represented by what are known as "proximity services" (op. cit.; Rayssac et al, 1994); these are primarily services in the local, caring and personal sectors.

The European Commission (EC, 1993b; European Commission 1995) specifically interprets these as follows, re-grouped to some extent:

- home care, help for handicapped and older people;
- childcare, assistance for young children, assistance for school children;
- information and communication;
- improving housing;
- personal and public safety;
- local public transport;
- enhancing public spaces;
- local shops;
- tourism;
- audiovisual sector;
- cultural heritage, local cultural development;
- waste processing, water provision, nature conservation, environmental inspection.

It is worth pointing out here that not all the fields listed are immediately accessible for low-skilled job-seekers. On the other hand, this offers prospects for the further expansion and development of the training and vocational training for disadvantaged persons.

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[8] Although there is uncertainty about the empirical status of these phenomena in the weak labour market position of the low-skilled, we cannot rule out the idea that they will only gain in importance in the future, partly within the context of the expansion of the European Union.

3.3.4 Design of training

Many different forms of training can be concealed behind the general term "training". The main difference is perhaps that between formal classroom training, on the one hand, and on-the-job training on the other hand. In the light of the negative educational experiences of early school-leavers, for example, as well as among many of the low-skilled, formal classroom training can be less desirable but perhaps difficult to avoid if a need for pre-vocational training exists, with a view to acquiring basic skills, literacy and numeracy. As previously stated, coordination problems exist between this pre-vocational phase and the genuine vocational training, partly because some provisions concentrate exclusively on initial or pre-vocational training, so that no automatic link exists to continuing education within the same provision. In addition, problems can also arise in relation to the non-recognition of qualifications, which are sometimes required to enter vocational training. For this reason, it is better to regard the training of disadvantaged persons as a process in which the job-seekers are prepared for the needs of the labour market step-by-step and in an integrated manner.

One attractive style is provided by dual or alternating education. One example of good practice is "Alternating Education" for early school-leavers in Belgium, which was launched in Flanders on an experimental basis in 1985. Alternating Education is a combination of general and vocational instruction at school with complementary training and work experience in firms. The programme was designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged and school-weary young people, within the context of extending compulsory education until the age of 18. By combining part-time education and part-time work, the transition of school-weary young people who were strongly work-oriented was eased. An evaluation study of this programme reveals that it has a high qualitative employment effect, i.e. (compared to other part-time education) there is closer correspondence between training and work, jobs are more stable and, consequently, better terms of employment are achieved (Nicaise and Douterlungne, 1991). By using various styles in alternation, an excessive aversion to the aspect of formal classroom training can be avoided. The work experience aspect, in addition to learning and practising certain professional skills, is just as important with respect to the application of basic work attitudes (keeping appointments, accepting authority, being able to concentrate on one task for long periods of time, social functioning, etc.). Moreover, this work experience usually provides much-needed income and has a dynamic effect. Examples are known of measures which start with work experience and subsequently incorporate a gradually increasing training component (Brun et al, 1991; Godinot et al, 1995).

3.3.5 Integration of training in a broader counselling context

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on the importance of route counsellingin the reintegration of disadvantaged persons (Van Den Berg et al, 1996). The underlying philosophy is that, with respect to the complexity of integrating disadvantaged persons, for whom a lack of training is usually only one of many problems, only a multidimensional strategy has any chance of success. The starting point in route counselling is an individualised plan in which the job-seeker, in consultation with a counsellor, plots a realistic route which can lead to work. Depending on the possibilities and needs of the job-seeker, this type of plan can include various tools in various ratios. The advantage of this is that, in this way - ideally at any rate - a logical and integrated whole is produced, without coordination problems and in the correct dosage. Various elements have already been discussed above which can be fitted into this type of framework:

- discuss and define the actual capacities, needs and aspirations of the job-seeker;
- define the extent to which pre-vocational training is needed and make the link to genuine vocational training. If a job-seeker is offered the prospect of vocational training right from the start, the motivation to follow the pre-vocational training may increase;
- define the extent to which the need exists for socio-psychological support throughout the route;

- a discussion of the job-seeker's financial situation, of any costs associated with certain measures and of the existing provisions and contributions (reimbursement of travel expenses, etc.);
- define the ratio and need for formal training, work experience and on-the-job training.

Other aspects which could possibly be included in the route to be defined are:

- help with finding placements or work experience places;
- job search training, which deals with how to look for work, how to apply, etc.;
- help and counselling with the actual job search, during and after the training;
- monitoring job-seekers who find work for a certain period after they have found that work;
- if it is envisaged that the aforementioned elements will not be sufficient for finding a job, or if it later appears that the job-seeker does not find a job, the use of one of the tools of temporary wage cost subsidy which should enable the job-seeker to find work, preferably as an extension of the training followed, so that the investment made is not lost;
- in the case of job-seekers for whom following training is by definition ruled out, it is possible to proceed directly with the use of these tools or, if the employment opportunities on the normal labour market are judged very low, immediate referral to employment in a protected environment is possible. Examples of this include sheltered employment for the more seriously handicapped and employment in "social economy" projects for other underprivileged people.

3.3.5.1 Perception of quality

Training initiatives which are strongly geared towards disadvantaged persons run the risk that, over time, they are confronted with reputation problems, for example because the outside world rightly or wrongly equates the quality of the training offered with the problems of the participants. In order to avoid this problem, it therefore seems worth recommending allowing the weaker groups to participate, where possible, in training which also serves the less weak population. In practice, however, this will usually be impossible because the specific problems of the various categories of disadvantaged persons require adapted methods and an adapted teaching rhythm. For this reason, perhaps even more so than in ordinary vocational training, it is necessary to monitor the quality of projects for disadvantaged persons and, more specifically, to make sure that no concessions are made in the quality of the training. More generally, this is obviously also important with a view to certification and the award of a formal qualification. Another strategy with a view to preventing reputation problems is the direct involvement of employers in the design and implementation of the project (Nicaise et al, 1995).

3.3.5.2 Private and public providers

In most countries, the vocational training landscape contains a widely varying pattern of suppliers, ranging from very small-scale initiatives with only a few participants to enormous organisations serving tens of thousands of participants every year. The dividing line between the large and small providers usually runs parallel to the difference between the private and public nature of the provision, although this is not always the case, partly as a result of different accents regarding decentralisation and privatisation. As far as the link between the effectiveness of the training on offer and the private or public nature of the provision is concerned, no conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the evaluation literature (Fay, 1996). Within the context of training and counselling for weak groups, a major part of the private initiative is concentrated in the non-profit sector ("local initiatives", "NGOs", etc.). Many of the latter small-scale initiatives have arisen because it was judged that the disadvantaged persons could not make sufficient use of public provisions. They are therefore usually geared towards specific categories of job-seekers, generally regarded as particularly vulnerable or liable to social exclusion (the disabled, young people who have left home, people on social benefits, the homeless, immigrants and ethnic minorities, the mentally ill, (former) drug addicts, former prisoners, etc.). In addition to training, an entire range of other services are also offered (individual guidance and counselling, housing facilities, solving personal and family problems, help in combatting discrimination and so on) sometimes to the detriment of the training itself. Compared to the public initiatives, which provide strongly labour market-oriented training, the training in these initiatives is usually directed more at the needs of the participants. This, in combination with the characteristics of their audience and the usually uncertain and limited financial position of these projects, explains why their effectiveness, measured in terms of immediate graduation to the labour market, is sometimes lower than that of public provisions (Nicaise *et al*, 1995). Nonetheless, such initiatives are necessary to reach the most disadvantaged persons, so that public and private initiatives definitely complement each other in this case.

3.3.5.3 Networking

As emerged from the discussion of the concept of route counselling, the reintegration of disadvantaged persons is a complex matter which can involve a range of different tools. It is therefore unlikely that one provision, particularly if it is small-scale, can have an impact in all these fields. For this reason, cooperation between various organisations is required, e.g. in the form of a network. We can think here of a mutual joint venture between private providers and between private and public initiatives, with a contribution from the public authorities, the PES and the social partners (Nicaise et al, 1995).

3.3.5.4 Black-box issues

Finally, several other aspects remain, which are seen as important by most observers but about which little is known as yet, or about which theoretical literature exists, but little if anything in the way of evaluation evidence. An example of this is the aspect of the quality and training of project staff in general and of the trainers in particular. It is clear that this must have an impact on the ultimate results, but this aspect is still seriously under-examined in the evaluation literature. The same applies to other aspects relating to the design and implementation of training projects. The relationship between effectiveness and elements such as teaching methods, training site conditions and scale (of the project and of the groups involved respectively) is still very vague. Evaluation studies of various labour market programmes typically indicate the extent to which effects are produced on the labour market position of participants, but rarely indicate why this is so. In this sense, it can rightly be said that the content-related and formal aspects of training programmes remain to a large extent black-box issues, which urgently require further examination (Fay, 1996).

3.4 Training and employment prospects for special target groups

3.4.1 The handicapped

Handicapped people are disadvantaged persons who differ greatly from the other categories listed. Moreover, the umbrella term "handicapped" masks a very broad heterogeneity of different sub-groups who are barely comparable in terms of their needs and capacities. In most countries an individual parallel circuit exists which is geared towards the training and integration of the handicapped, although there is a tendency to integrate this group, where possible, into the existing mainstream provisions (e.g. in the Training for Work provision in the UK, where the handicapped are also exempt from the condition that they have to be unemployed for 6 months (MISEP, 1997)).

The previously discussed problems of using the notion of "employability" in detecting disadvantaged groups applies all the more to handicapped people. Thus, the official definition of a handicap in almost all EU countries is expressed in negative terms as a reduction of work capacity or as a reduced potential to find or retain a job (Delsen, 1996).

Within the OECD countries, on average 10% of the population of working age are handicapped. Of these, only 30-40% are in work. The majority of handicaps relate to a physical disability (50-80%), while 5-15% are related to mental retardation or mental illness.

Positive employment prospects for the handicapped should be found chiefly in the commercial services sector. The growth of this sector increases the possibilities for people with a physical impairment, but does imply that the possibilities of finding work for people with cognitive limitations or mental impairment are becoming increasingly limited (Delsen, 1996).

The range of training for handicapped people covers various fields and is developing rapidly. First of all, as already referred to, the tendency is towards integrating the (physically) disabled into ordinary education and into the mainstream vocational training provisions. For this purpose, special support services and special financial arrangements have been developed in various European countries (see Council of Europe, undated, for a summary).

In addition, some training provisions are specifically geared towards the handicapped (Council of Europe, undated, provides a summary of existing provisions in various European countries). The provision of training relating to modern technologies and close contacts with the business community (training places and practical sessions) appear to be factors which influence the placement results of these special centres (Delsen, 1996). Given that the possibilities for the mentally handicapped are fairly limited in mainstream training provisions, it could be expected that they would be given preferential treatment in this special training segment geared especially towards handicapped people. However, Delsen (1996) claims that in all EU countries, "training in specialized establishments is biased towards non-mental disabilities."

Another trend in the training of handicapped people is that increasing use is being made of on-the-job training under ordinary working conditions, where the handicapped person and the employer have the opportunity to get to know each other and to overcome prejudices. Here too, a bias is observed where physical disabilities are concerned (Delsen, 1996).

One promising experiment is what is known as "supported employment". "Supported employment is competitive employer-paid work combined with the provision of continuous on-the-job support, where required, to employers and to employees with (often severe) disabilities in order that the latter can perform a normal job in open employment. (...) The training-employment model is replaced by an employment-training model. The emphasis is on a guarantee that the job will be done and job coaches, employed by the placement body, train, assist and support the worker in the work situation." (Delsen, 1996, p. 533). Research in the US indicates that these programmes are substantially cheaper than sheltered employment. Moreover, the model seems ideally suited to people with learning difficulties and some 90% of supported workers are apparently mentally retarded (Hardman, 1994; Lunt and Thornton, 1994; OECD, 1992; Pozner and Hammond, 1993; Wansbrough and Cooper, 1980, as quoted by Delsen, 1996).

However, some handicapped people cannot (or not yet) be integrated into the ordinary labour market. Moreover, certain groups are simply not able to work under normal circumstances (Lunt and Thornton, 1993). These groups do have an escape route to so-called sheltered employment. In most countries, the mentally retarded are the largest group in the sheltered employment initiatives (Delsen, 1996). The basic premise of sheltered employment is that an attempt is made to prepare participants for employment in the open labour market. However, in practice, this does not usually seem to succeed (Samoy and Waterplas, 1992, gives a summary of sheltered employment initiatives in the EU).

As far as the impact of training for the handicapped is concerned, the following results are worth mentioning:

A summary study by the Council of Europe (undated) quoted widely diverging placement grades for former participants from a number of handicapped training centres in various European countries. These are 80% for West Germany, 50% for Belgium, 60% for Hungary, 25% for Ireland, 90% for Northern Ireland and 28% in the other regions of the UK, 90% in the Netherlands, 20-40% in Portugal and 50% in Slovenia.

An evaluation of vocational training for handicapped people in Belgium performed by Samoy (1993) established an employment probability of 60-80% after 12 months. After two years, these percentages are slightly higher.

3.4.2 Minimum income recipients

The problems of reintegrating minimum income recipients are again totally different in nature to those of the physically and mentally handicapped. These are people who have difficulty adjusting to the demands and standards of the work situation. This often goes hand in hand with a lack of training, not necessarily because of limited learning capacity, but because discrimination mechanisms occurred in the past at school. In looking for training initiatives for this group, we must therefore think first and foremost of work experience projects, which can contribute to the formation of work attitudes. Unstable living conditions and social handicaps imply that a very high drop-out rate is typically observed for initiatives involving this target group, so that the required attention must be devoted, right from the start, to motivating participants.

One successful example of a training initiative for this target group are the Belgian TOK projects (Employment and Training for the Underprivileged), which were evaluated by Wouters et al, 1993. This project was geared towards minimum income recipients who typically suffer from an accumulation of disadvantages: very poor schooling, little or no work experience, an unstable financial situation and problems at psychological and social levels. The evaluation reveals that a very underprivileged population was indeed reached, although a high level of heterogeneity was also observed. Thus, a number of more highly educated people were also involved, who were battling with serious psychological problems or with drug addiction problems, for example. The programme itself provided work experience, education and job placement. The education aspect was aimed primarily at introducing work attitudes and at (limited) technical education. Furthermore, a great deal of importance was attached to the development of a positive self image and a normal time pattern and to the development of social skills. The training lasts a relatively long time (1000 hours) and most of the projects were very small-scale (the majority involved between 5 and 15 participants). The drop-out rate was between 20 and 25% (admission for psychiatric treatment, prison, absconding, etc., but those who re-applied were readmitted to the project). Twelve months after the end of the project, employment was measured at 40.7%, in other words 15% higher than for a comparison group of non-participants. Five percent continued on to more specialist training.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH SHORTFALLS AND PRIORITIES

The observation that certain social groups are particularly hard-hit by unemployment has, in recent years, given rise to the development of many initiatives designed to reintegrate these disadvantaged groups. One could expect that this wealth of experience, combined with the many evaluation results which are available, would provide a fairly good picture of the possibilities and limitations of a labour market policy aimed at disadvantaged persons. However, the truth is more subtle. Many unanswered questions remain and, the more the evaluation methodology is refined, the more new questions are raised and existing certainties are called into question. Thus, little remains of the initial optimism where education and training are the ideal strategy for combatting unemployment.

In terms of pursuing a (training) policy with respect to disadvantaged groups, the need certainly exists for additional insights where the following aspects are concerned:

- First and foremost, there is a need for further research into the *causes of disadvantages* on the labour market. In particular, further research is needed into the thresholds which hinder or prevent access to the labour market (and to labour market programmes). In addition, concrete solutions must be sought which can contribute to creating better *accessibility to the labour market*, for example, by working towards automatic registration of all job-seekers with the PES, by targeted marketing campaigns to combat existing prejudices, by looking for mechanisms which can neutralise the unemployment and the poverty trap. Methods for promoting the *accessibility of the labour market programmes* themselves must also be found, for example, by using a criterion of net effectiveness for evaluating programmes, by research into the pros and cons of quota, target group policy, etc. Of special note here is that very little is known so far about the aspirations and motivation of the disadvantaged groups. Research into these aspects can contribute to the development of incentives, aimed at higher participation and lower drop-out rates.

- The *evaluation methodology* for measuring the impact of training programmes has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. Sometimes it seems as if the chief contribution of increased theoretical insights is that the results of the majority of evaluations performed so far must be interpreted with great caution, as a result of methodological shortcomings. It is already clear that a number of aspects have so far received insufficient attention. For instance, more attention must urgently be paid to the question of what works and for which group. For example, a number of studies reveal that formal classroom training has little effect among younger people, while this form of training is effective with other groups. Little doubt exists as to the importance of schooling, on-the-job training, work experience and the introduction of job search abilities, but much less clarity exists as to the ratio in which these elements must be offered to the various target groups.

- The answer to the question *why* is something effective is even less clear. The basic question is how vocational training increases opportunities on the labour market. Is this because the training contributes to the formation of human capital and therefore leads to higher productivity? Or is it rather that the level of training and whether or not vocational training has been followed is used by employers as a cheap screening method (positively or negatively, depending on the reputation of the training provision in question) and as a sign of the motivation of an applicant? In addition to this basic question, which is not without relevance from a policy perspective, more particularly, very little is known about the relationship between the effectiveness of training on the one hand and its formal and content-related aspects on the other hand. This is concerned, for example, with the quality of the staff and of the training, the methods to be employed, the importance of the duration and intensity of the training, the importance of certification, the question of whether some disadvantaged groups would not be better served by mainstream programmes, or whether the advantages of creating individual programmes for specific target groups, using adapted methods, do not sometimes cancel out the disadvantages.

- The success of training is, in any event, closely linked to its *relevance to the labour market*. For this reason, further research to detect qualification shortages and needs is urgently needed. More especially, existing or new market segments must be found which do offer a place or a future for low-skilled employment, so that training efforts for the disadvantaged can be better targeted and become more effective.

- *Preventive or early* intervention can, in some cases, be more effective than a curative approach. In addition to setting up special drop-out prevention programmes in initial education, we can also think here of early activation in categories of unemployed people who are at very high risk of becoming long-term unemployed. To this end, however, further research is needed into the risk factors of long-term unemployment in order to achieve a more correct understanding of the relative importance of the various disadvantages.

- Finally, a broader view of the macro-economic impact of vocational training is needed. It is not enough to correct employment results for deadweight and substitution: other indirect effects on employment must also be taken into consideration and, more generally, variables other than employment alone (income, productivity, public costs and benefits, etc.).

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Unemployment problems and difficulties in finding and keeping a job affect certain social groups considerably more than others. This typically seems to apply to immigrants and ethnic minorities, disabled persons, those re-entering the labour market, the low-skilled, early school-leavers, benefit claimants, older job-applicants and persons with a criminal record.

Although it is probably not comprehensive, this list shows clearly that the issue of disadvantaged groups cannot be simply limited to a single dimension. The list is quite heterogeneous, and each of the groups it contains has its own specific limitations and potential. However, a tentative generalization could lead us to summarize as follows: deficiencies with regard to education and skills appear to be a common theme running through the various categories, whether due to insufficient (or a lack of) initial schooling or to the possession of inadequate or outdated knowledge. The latter points to a possible solution to the problem - or at least part of it - which would entail people upgrading their work skills by following appropriate vocational training.

5.1.1.1 Position on the labour market

The problems relating to disadvantaged people are set against the backdrop of a dramatic reduction in demand for low-skilled workers. The reasons cited include technological innovation, which is said to work to the disadvantage of low-skilled work, as well as increasing competition from low-wage countries. On the other hand, examination shows that the massive destruction of low-skilled jobs in the industry sector over the years has been parallelled by an impressive proliferation of low-skilled jobs in the services sector. In other words, the current problems do not result exclusively from a lack of low-skilled job opportunities: other factors include displacement by capital and/or more highly skilled workers, based on the premise that low-skilled workers are relatively too expensive. Displacement occurs because highly educated people who are unable to find a job which matches their qualifications will often be satisfied with a position with a lower skill level. If displacement is empirically significant, and there is some indication that this is the case, then it can be assumed that training alone will not be sufficient to bring about a permanent improvement in the employment prospects of the disadvantaged.

5.1.1.2 Accessibility of labour market measures

Analysis of the population participating in mainstream labour market programmes, including vocational training, reveals a typical underrepresentation of the disadvantaged groups. A similar phenomenon can be observed in programmes specifically aimed at disadvantaged target groups: it is generally the least disadvantaged section of the target group in question who take part in training. There are several possible explanations for these observations. There are legal, administrative and institutional barriers which rule certain underprivileged groups out of the programmes, either *a priori* or *de facto*. Among the problems is the position of people stranded on the fringe of the labour market; another contributing factor is the selective behaviour of those in charge of the training programmes, particularly where selection is based on gross transfer-to-work figures: driven by an obligation to ensure that a certain minimum percentage of training course participants move on to a job often leads trainers to single out applicants with a stronger profile - even though, paradoxically, the latter derive less benefit from training than others would (see below). Further explanations can be sought among the disadvantaged persons themselves, with lack of motivation, fear of failure, negative school experience and possibly material and financial thresholds all perhaps preventing them from taking part. Last but not least, the range of programmes available may not be adapted to the needs and aspirations of the majority of the weaker groups. Making participation by certain categories of unemployed compulsory would correct the proportional underrepresentation, provided there were enough training courses to accommodate such an influx. However, experience has shown that compulsion leads to additional problems of quality and motivation; such an option cannot therefore be unreservedly recommended. It would seem more appropriate to anticipate the needs of the target group (status, wages, prospects of transferring to work, comprehensive counselling, etc.

5.1.1.3 Effectiveness of training for disadvantaged persons

A review of evaluation studies assessing the impact of training on the participants' subsequent status on the labour market yields a wide variety of results. Typically, the more disadvantages a participant has, the lower his chances are of finding a job after training. However, several studies seem to indicate that the net effectiveness of the training initiative (i.e. the subsequent variance in employment opportunity between a participant and a non-participant with comparable characteristics) is higher for participants who are in a weaker position on the labour market (low-skilled workers, the long-term unemployed etc.). This observation is important, because it shows that the argument of effectiveness can and must be used to support a training policy for disadvantaged groups. It also undermines the rationality concealed in the "creaming-off" behaviour of those responsible for training programmes and policies. As a consequence, it is fundamental to draw the attention of policymakers and managements of training and education facilities to this issue. Furthermore, the evaluation criteria used to assess training courses need to be reworked: instead of relying on the gross transfer-to-work figures, evaluation should be based on the net effect of the training with reference to the target group characteristics. In addition to providing accurate indicators of the efficiency of these policies, this will indirectly promote redistribution to the benefit of backward target groups.

Besides the impact of a labour market policy measure (such as training) on the chances of an individual participant, it is also important to examine its effects on the unemployed as a whole. The extent of displacement and deadweight effects is potentially very large, although a cited study shows that these effects are not overly pronounced as regards training aimed at the weaker target groups. This argument thus also favours redistribution and targeting.

5.1.1.4 Towards enhanced effectiveness

While the available research literature fails to answer a number of relevant questions, several elements are identified with regard to the form and content of training facilities which could help boost effectiveness.

When setting up training initiatives, it is extremely important to take into account the capabilities, knowledge, needs and aspirations of the target population. Training for disadvantaged groups is shorter than other training facilities, even though these groups clearly require a longer training period. With a view to increasing the level of participation, reducing the dropout rate and raising the impact, it is important that there is a sufficient focus on motivation and social guidance in a holistic approach.

Targeting also implies that the needs of the labour market are taken into account. This aspect is sometimes disregarded in vocational training for disadvantaged groups, and this has immediate repercussions on the transfer-to-work results. It is therefore important that further efforts be made to develop an instrument for detecting skills shortfalls, particularly in those market sectors where job opportunities can still be found for disadvantaged groups. In this context the "proximity services" still appear to offer opportunities for both training and employment of weaker groups. Several other issues such as quality control, cooperation with social partners and the public employment services and certification are closely linked to this issue.

The integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market is a complex issue. Instruments such as vocational and pre-vocational training most certainly have a significant role to play here, but they are generally not enough on their own. Ideally, the aim should be an individual, needs-based, tailor-made route focusing not only on training, but also on work experience, job search training and assistance, socio-psychological support, and concern for the material and financial status of the job-applicant. Since most training providers cannot possibly cater for all these aspects, the attainment objective should lie in extensive networking and cooperation between all parties involved.

Several potentially very important issues with regard to evaluation of the effectiveness of training programmes have so far received insufficient attention. The quality of training staff, the training methods used, the extent to which a given instrument yields better results with one group than another, the training site conditions and the scale, duration and intensity of the training are all factors which probably have a decisive influence on effectiveness, but for which little or no evaluation evidence is available. Further research in that direction is consequently urgently needed.

6. NETWORKS

6.1 "Contradictions and perverse effects of labour market policies for disadvantaged groups" network

This research network was created within the framework of the European Commission's Third Poverty Programme. In April 1992 the Commission launched a call for transnational research tenders on two themes, one of which dealt with "contradictions and perverse effects of public policies and practices especially in the area of social policies". This topic was eventually elaborated in two parallel research projects, one concerning social intervention policies and one concerning labour market policies. An international network was set up for the latter projects, the activities of which gave rise to a book (Nicaise et al, 1995) and an abstract in the Journal of European Social Policy (Nicaise et al, 1995c). This network no longer exists.

6.1.1 Leonardo Da Vinci programme (EC, 1995b)

The Leonardo Da Vinci programme is a Community action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy. The programme mainly provides support for transnational cooperation between the vocational training players in several participating countries. One of its priorities relates to the fight against social exclusion. Contact: DG XXII of the European Commission and National Coordination Units.

6.1.2 LoWER (European Low-wage Employment Research network)

This network has been created within the context of the EC's Fourth Framework Programme for Scientific Research. LoWER organises exchanges and conferences on the measurement and causes of low pay as well as on policies to combat it. Contact: Professor W. Salverda, University of Groningen, Faculty of Economics, PO Box 800, NL-9700 AV Groningen.

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSFER OF INNOVATIONS IN EUROPE

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1. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN EUROPE: OUTLINES OF AN EMERGING STRATEGY FOR REPORTING

1.1 Introductory remarks

This section of the report should present underlying theories in the domain of curriculum research and development as well as current approaches in the design of innovative teaching and learning arrangements. The aim is to examine the relations between institutionalised patterns of curriculum (re)design, and related piloting activities with new learning schemes. Moreover, some leading ideas that direct the debates on re-thinking curricular frameworks and curriculum processes should be presented.

These broad and demanding aims could not yet be reached in the process of preparing this report. This, to some extent, is related to the current situation in which several major European projects have been launched in the field (and could be seen as major contributors). However, the projects have not reached the stage of work that research-based conclusions could be summarised on the basis of their reported research results.

The following article develops a framework for a more systematic reporting instead of trying to present a European 'state of the art' report on the basis of analysed results.[1] Consequently, the next European Report on VET Research and Development (to be published in 2000) is expected to make use of CEDEFOP's networking activities and to bring the results of the ongoing projects into a 'group picture'.

Thus, the following article should be regarded as the first step towards a process of cumulative reporting. The aim is to develop a European 'group picture' of different systemic and cultural frameworks and to raise questions on pattern maintenance and on 'paradigm shifts'. Moreover, the approach paves the way for analyses of the (potential) contributions of different national approaches to (future) transnational cooperation. Finally, the article paves the way for further reflections on the prospects for mutual learning in transnational co-operation projects.

1.2 Starting points for further reporting: Explorations on 'key qualifications', 'flexibility' and 'curriculum development'

The considerations that are presented in the following article lay the foundation for further synthesis work to be undertaken in the coming years. For this purpose two major issues - *'flexibility'* and *'key qualifications'* - are explored *as the central themes.* Subsequently, some basic remarks are made on current tendencies in curriculum development. Finally, these analyses are related to current problems in policy-development for VET and to reflections on possibilities for developing European cooperation in this field. In detail, the subsequent main sections will deal with the following aspects:

- The *second main section* focuses on the *'flexibility'* and explores common challenges to which all VET systems (and related curriculum development approaches) have to respond.
- The *third main section* presents an overview on *'key qualification debates'* and develops an interpretative framework to relate parallel concepts to the respective systemic and cultural contexts.
- The *fourth main section* analyses current tendencies in *policy frameworks for curriculum development* (in order to link 'key qualification debates' and 'flexibility' debates to these tendencies. Moreover, the section gives examples of different approaches to developing transnational cooperation in this field.

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[1] This article is partly based on a study on "Vocational education and training inEurope in the process of change" submitted to CEDEFOP 1997 by J. N. Streumer and L. Odenthal.

- In the *final main section* the central themes are confronted with a set of new *structural problems* that give respectively new accents to the debates on 'flexibility' and 'key qualifications'. Subsequently, a further step is taken to develop a framework that relates the debates and the current problems to each other via different levels of *'modernisation agendas' for European VET systems*. However, the section does not provide any final conclusions or recommendations. Instead, some *questions* are raised *for further analyses* (and for respective synthesis work that should contribute to the next European report).

2. THE CHALLENGE OF FLEXIBILITY

2.1 Current societal challenges for modernisation of VET

In the European Commission's White Paper "Training and Learning, Towards the Learning Society" (1996) it is concluded that as this century draws to its close the causes of the change in society have been diverse and have affected the education and training systems in Europe in different ways. First of all there is the impact of *technological and social changes* (in particular linked to uses of information and communication technology), secondly the impact of *demographic changes* and thirdly, partly as a result of the above mentioned factors of upheaval, the *structural changes in the economy and industry*.

Technology is penetrating society at a huge speed, originally more hidden, and hardly visible; nowadays technology is dominating life and disseminated in all processes of profit-making and non-profit making organisations (Nijhof and Streumer, 1994). A major factor in innovation in vocational education and training results from the responses of the VET system to the *technological and social changes* in the workplace. As technology has advanced there has been a reversal in the demand for unskilled workers. Whereas the demand for unskilled workers increased during the earlier phase of mechanisation, and that demand was obviously easy to meet, the demand for unskilled workers is decreasing nowadays (Prais, 1995). A considerable amount of manual, repetitive and routine jobs, has already disappeared and it is expected that this process will proceed.

At the same time there seems to be a general *upskilling of jobs*. Technological developments require employees to perform a greater variety of tasks ranging from planning to evaluation. At the same time there is increased emphasis in business and industry on *polyvalent skills*, on the multi-function employee. These changes put a strong pressure on mental flexibility and a (meta-)cognitive orientation to cope with a variety of products and production processes and problems which are interrelated and require higher problem-solving skills (Nijhof and Streumer, 1994). In addition Hughes remarks (1994, p. 149) that technological changes also lead to a clear tendency towards more team-work: the man-machine relationship is being replaced by an interaction between teams and technical systems. As a consequence of the rapid changes in technology it is becoming evident that the intervals between training and work are becoming shorter.

Demographic trends have increased life expectancy and at the same time change the age structure of the population, thereby increasing the need for continuous learning (European Commission, 1993). As a consequence of decreasing birth-rates, at least in Western societies, the proportion of older people is growing and this has major consequences for the labour market and the skill structure (Nijhof Streumer, 1994). According to the Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee of the Commission of the European Communities (IRDAC) the demographic evolution of European population is such that by 2000 the number of those retiring will exceed the number of new entrants to the labour force. In Europe, next to a shortage in terms of quantity, this can lead to a shortage of skills in terms of quality. The information revolution is rendering much previous education and training obsolete, or simply irrelevant.

The last decade can also be characterised by *structural changes in industry and the economy*. Technological developments have created a global market place and global competition (IRDAC, 1991). Today, markets for most products are global in scope and for high-technology products the markets are driven by product innovation (IRDAC, 1991). In this global economy in which shorter life cycles of goods and services are becoming a key feature, the human resources and their working potential have become the decisive factor in competition and for the success of the enterprise, being the source of creativity and innovation. This means that it is no longer the sole investment in new technologies, but rather the intelligent application of technologies as well as new ideas for products, services and efficient work processes which constitute the decisive advantages in competition and success (European Commission, 1993).

There is a further factor in this globally competitive arena. *Competitiveness* depends not only on creating and applying *new knowledge* to innovate the product and the manufacturing process but it needs to be achieved *faster than the competitors*. Thus the time from research output to application across industry is decreasing rapidly and this accelerated technology transfer is aided by collaborative working between industry and academia (or other research centres) or by movement of research workers from academic life to industry (IRDAC, 1991). At the enterprise level, attempts are undertaken to manage the new market developments by innovative rationalisation strategies. These developments are based on the shift from mass-market to customer-oriented markets, characterised by frequently changing requirements, demanding a broad and diversified range of products and services.

The changes discussed above in society and work have an undeniable *impact on vocational education and training*. Limited scope training with a fixed set of qualifications (knowledge, skills and attitudes) is no longer sufficient; employees will require not only *higher order skills* but the *capacity to* adjust to and *master new situations* (Hughes, 1994). Multi-skilling or the *ability to perform tasks across a number of skill areas*, combined with the *ability of rapidly acquiring new skill*s is becoming the expected norm (Chrosciel and Plumbridge, 1995).

2.2 Reflections on flexibility as a perspective for developing VET

Since the mid-1980s the issue *'flexibility'* has been a key element in the debates that have been related to themes like 'introduction of new technologies', to 'new production concepts', to 'global networks' in production and marketing and to 'organisational innovations'. In the following some selected statements are presented to illustrate the different accents that have been proposed with the perspective 'more flexibility' within VET:

- As a result of technological, commercial and organisational developments, employers are making different, and perhaps even more and greater, demands on employees than ever before. In general, there is a visible tendency towards an increasing interest by employers in *`flexible, broadly-skilled employees'*, who possess a range of more general qualifications (cf. for example, De Jong et al, 1990; Moelker, 1992; Van Zolingen, 1995).
- The required flexibility is not just a matter of *short-term flexibility*, which is facilitated by the growth of various forms of a typical employment relations such as part-time work, temporary contracts, etc. Long-term flexibility is also crucial. *Long-term flexibility* refers to the ability of workers to adapt quickly to new technologies or production processes.
- According to De Grip and Hoevenberg (1996), the main source of this long-term increase in flexibility of the labour force is continuing vocational education and training, while Chrosciel and Plumbridge (1995) find it apparent that a need exists for a *flexible curriculum design in modular form*:
  a) for broadly-based initial training in basic enabling skills and fundamental technical information and theory; and
  b) to accommodate frequent updating and retraining in appropriate mixes of specialised skills, technical information, and applied theory.

- Nijhof and Streumer (1994) make a distinction between *competitive flexibility* (*a low skill approach*) and *flexible specialisation* (*high skills approach*). The first approach is job specific, fast and restrictive. This strategy is focused upon the short-term needs of a company. Flexible specialisation, however, is oriented on the long-term needs of companies and their employees (e.g. knowledge workers with more job security). Accommodation and adaptation to change is the key role of this strategy which includes the demand from employees to be trained and educated continuously to stay employable.
- Raffe (1994) defines *four forms of flexibility*: individual, curricular, pathway and delivery flexibility. *Individual flexibility* is the result of training, the ability to apply skills in different situations and roles and it refers to the ability to apply what has been learned to different situations. In this sense, flexibility is identical to transferability, and flexibility indicates the versatility of employees. With *curricular flexibility* the responsiveness of the curriculum over time, across space and across individuals. *Flexibility of delivery* has to do with variation in methods of learning, different institutional contexts and different time periods (for the same curriculum). Finally *flexibility of pathways* which enables students to follow different trajectories and hold open future options. (In section 4.2 these forms of flexibility, with an exception to individual flexibility, will be elaborated in more detail.)

2.3 Flexibility in VET - a systemic framework

In order to specify the particular meaning of the concept 'flexibility' for the development of vocational education and training Nijhof and Streumer (1994) portray *education and training as a system*. Flexibility is seen as a consequence of countervailing forces in the past, present and future. The pressure from these forces do have an effect on educational institutions in different ways, just as they have on society in general. In taking a systems view, Nijhof and Streumer distinguish between *context*, *input*, *process*, and *output* factors. Different kinds of feedback loops and relations can be traced between these factors. In order to keep their explanation rather simple they sketch the following figure (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.1:

Flexibility within a systems concept (Nijhof and Streumer (1994, p. 3))

Context	*Input*	*Process*	*Output*
new technologies global economy demography and cultural changes	responsiveness platforms interfaces between tripartite actors institutionalization	flexible system time (pacing) pathway (individualization and/or differentiation)	transferability
labour market changes			
changes in skills structure and skill formation	qualification structure accreditation of prior learning certification	new content & skills learning environment (simulation, classroom, on-the-job, off-the-job) flexibility of entrance and leaving conditions modular structures (modularization)	expertise higher (order) skills key qualifications transition skills transferable skills mobility certificate (partial or whole)

In their theory, the authors try to describe a process in which *contextual factors* play a decisive role in putting pressure on educational institutions to respond. Flexibility in this context takes the form of *responsiveness*. The readiness and skill to react to observed mismatches between demand and supply on the labour market shows the flexibility of an institution (to counteract context factors such as new technologies, changes in skill structure etc.).

This kind of responsiveness will lead to decisions regarding content, skills, certification and qualification structures. It will also lead to new platforms and interfaces between labour market and vocational education and training. So, flexibility takes the form here of a responsible set of institutions, often guided by tripartite structures of government, social partners, and VET institutions.

The *processes* have mainly to do with the internal conditions of VET. Here a lot of instruments to match goals and means can be seen: in many cases VET has changed from a rather traditional form into a flexible, highly individualised system of training and education. Flexibilisation of time and content (and of the whole learning environment) is a dominant reaction of many contemporary systems to the pressures of the labour market.

In this respect new curricular strategies or 'curricular vehicles' are being developed as *input* factors (which often are related to innovative applications of information and communication technologies in training and education). As such 'curricular vehicles' can be mentioned

- teaching/learning environments that are based on simulations and games;
- flexibility clauses in entrance and leaving conditions,
- the uses of credit accumulation frameworks that may be related to modular structures of curricula.

These means have to push forward the students and teachers in the direction of generic skills, basic skills, transferable and key qualifications. These concepts express a new direction of vocational education into a general vocational education. The main assumption behind this element of flexibility is transferability, which means the competence or ability to apply new skills in new situations. Transferability is also part of a cognitive map of flexibility.

The third category of flexibility has to do with systems *output*: *transferability* and all underlying components. When *transferability* is the potential to perform in new and different situations, we can indicate the potential to *transfer*

- *from* a particular *content to* a related *content* (e.g. maths into algebra);
- *from* particular *skills to* related *skills* (e.g. from riding a bicycle to driving a car as regards the highway code);
- *from* a particular *content to* related *skills* (e.g. learning about computers to learning how to program);
- *from* particular *skills to* a related *content* (e.g. from the construction of an electronic circuit to electronics).

These forms of transfer are related to transferable skills, which can be used in different settings, content areas. Besides these, we have to distinguish between outputs with a restricted and an extended possibility of usage. *Key qualifications*, in the form as they have expressed and discussed (in particular in Germany - see the following section), can be seen as generic skills for a (new) employee to be flexible both in the future and in the workplace now.

3. EXPLORATIONS ON 'KEY QUALIFICATION DEBATES'

The issue 'key qualifications' has been indicated as an essential link between the 'flexibility' debates (on diverse levels) and actual curriculum development. In the following the exploration of this issue will proceed in three steps:

a) some *bibliographical references* are given to indicate the starting positions and the scope of the debates on 'key qualifications';

b) an *interpretative framework* is introduced to make transparent three main strands of European debates (and the relations between these strands and corresponding contexts of curriculum development);

c) some reflections are made on linkages between 'key qualification' debates and different patterns of curriculum development.

3.1 Starting positions in the debates on key qualifications

The *common denominator* of diverse 'key qualification' debates can be put in a nutshell by the following recapitulation of the summarising study of the technical assistance office of the Eurotecnet programme:

Due to the new technologies, the workplace and its whole environment has substantially changed; the same is true for the organisation of industrial processes, work organisation and enterprise structure. This requires new qualifications from employees: apart from the "traditional" instrumental skills. Related to a defined job within a specific sector, employees must also acquire key qualifications, such as the ability to work in teams, to learn continuously, to system-thinking, etc. (Eurotecnet 1995b).

The *original concept* "key qualifications" was introduced by Mertens (1974). His opening contribution was an extended presentation of his prior reflections on the difficulties to use labour market prognoses as a basis for future-oriented curriculum planning. As a contrast, he introduced a concept of future-oriented qualifications that would prepare the trainees for a changing labour market.

Mertens' concept of key qualifications

Basic qualifications (Basisqualifikationen) are qualifications of a higher order (or common denominators of specific abilities); they enable a vertical transfer towards different contexts of knowledge utilisation (which respond to specific performance requirements and to diverse societal and occupational demands);

Horizontal qualifications (Horizontalqualifikationen) enhance the ability to process information in such a way that one's knowledge basis will become broader and one is equipped for knowledge transfer between different spheres of knowledge;

Transversal knowledge elements (Breitenelemente) are components of knowledge or qualifications that as required or utilised as elements of a 'shared knowledge basis' within different contexts;

Vintage factors (Vintage-Faktoren) refer to particular needs for accumulation of knowledge and abilities that arise from qualification gaps between different generations or from essential changes in the required knowledge-basis.

Mertens saw key qualifications as tools that help the individuals to survive in an increasingly complex and changing world. At the same time - from the societal point of view - he considered them as strategic tools for innovation and social change. Mertens advocated the creation of a flexible and future-oriented skill potential of all individuals - not only those in the labour market. Key qualifications should provide "the key for a fast frictionless revelation of changing specific knowledge. Key qualifications are not restricted to be mediated at schools, or in training. but should be provided and acquired from pre-school age up to retirement.

In a later phase of debates Bunk, Kaiser and Zedler (1991) introduced a somewhat *revised interpretation* of key qualifications. Here Bunk (1994, p. 11) distinguishes four dimensions of job performance competence[2], which can be considered as an alternative way to indicate the main aspects of key qualifications:

- *Vocational competence*: Ability to carry out work independently in a specific field of activities and without supervision.
- *Methodical competence*: Ability to react in a systematic and fitting manner to any difficulties and to be able to apply the experience gained in a meaningful way to other problems encountered in the work.

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[2] note that the German use of "competence" is not exactly identical with those used in French or English discussion

- *Social competence*: Ability to communicate with others and to work with them in a co-operative manner, to display group-oriented behaviour and empathy.
- *Participative competence*: Ability to shape one's own workplace and the working environment in a broader sense, to be able to organise and make decisions, and be prepared to take responsibility.

3.2 Diversity of 'key qualification' debates within different VET cultures

The literature references give rough indications of the common denominator and of the scope of debates. However, the debates at a national level cannot be brought under one integrative concept which could be taken as a basis for a unified European approach. Instead, on the basis of different national traditions (and institutional contexts) the debates have been based on respectively different concepts. It is worthwhile to note that differences in terminology refer to real differences between the underlying approaches.

In the following, an interpretative framework is introduced in order to make the national debates (and underlying approaches) more transparent on European level. The basic assumption of the framework is that the most influential national debates can be grouped into three main strands according to the following criteria:

- what is the main focus (or the frame of reference) of the basic concept;
- what is the main thrust to develop a new quality of vocational learning (and to promote a new quality in the utilisation of the outcomes of learning);
- what kind of tools and instruments are considered as the main 'vehicles' for developing appropriate curricula for vocational learning;
- what kind of implications the basic concept has for lifelong learning.

3.2.1 Debates on 'Key skills'

In a European comparison the debates *in the United Kingdom* (UK) related to the concept 'key skills' can be characterised in the following way:

- The *basic concept* in these debates *refers to a particular set of identified 'skills'* that are assumed to provide a support structure for more content-specific learning in educational system and for lifelong learning (after the initial education and training period). Currently the UK authorities relate the concept to such skills as 'communication', 'application of number', 'application of ICT', 'decision-making', 'team-working', 'improving own learning'.
- The *main thrust* of the concept has been introduced to enhance the *skills of individual learners* and *to enrich* the (hitherto narrow) *vocational learning*. The concept 'key skills' aims to transcend the particular (vocational) contexts.
- In the context of *curriculum development* the concept of 'key skills' is related to *specific modules or units* that are complementary to the foundation elements of the curricula ('basic skills', 'specific skills'). These modules or units are to be assessed as essential components of the learning outcomes.
- Concerning *the perspective of 'lifelong learning'* the concept of 'key skills' is mainly related to the perspective of *improving the prospects* for individual competence accumulation and *for individual mobility*.

3.2.2 Debates on 'Key/Core competences'

The more diversified set of particular approaches and debates the are here aggregated under the notion 'key/core competences' can be conceived as a 'middle field' between two poles. The main characteristics of these approaches are the following:

- The *concepts* have been used more vaguely and on a more occasional basis. They *refer* in a more global way *to a set of competences that transcend traditional divisions of labour and traditional occupational profiles*. Very often these competences are referred to using negative definitions ('extra-functional' or 'process-independent' competences) or by indicating a broader range of utilisation ('broadly applicable competences', 'transversal competences').
- The debates are not taking a particular set of 'skills' and the enhancement of individual learning processes as their *starting point*. Instead, they are primarily related to the needs for *'organisational learning'* (i.e. group- or system-related working, learning and participation) within *'new production concepts'*. Thus, the enhancement of the competence-basis of (individual) learners is related to needs to promote an organisational learning culture and to improve collective work performance and collective mastery of production processes. (As examples of such approaches one can consider the '*working interfaces' between (continuing) vocational training and organisational innovation projects* in countries like France and Denmark and related orientations in the *innovation plans of the regional colleges* in the Netherlands.)
- *From the perspective of curriculum development* the main thrust of such debates is not in particular units or modules but in *learning designs* that promote the ability of organisational actors *to relate the individual competences to the respective organisational context* and to contribute to the development and improvement of the work performance. (As examples of such approaches one can consider project-specific curriculum (re)designs and attempts to incorporate such models in 'regular' curriculum development e.g. in the Danish AMU framework.)
- From the perspective of *lifelong learning* the debates emphasise the ability of organisational actors to *maintain a culture of 'organisational learning'* and to respond and contribute to constant changes in working life by developing their organisations as 'learning organisations'.

3.2.3 Debates on 'Key qualifications'

The third set of debates can be conceived also as a particular variant of the second set of debates. However, in the (mostly German) debates on 'key qualifications' there are particular additional features that require separate attention:

- The *initial debates* on 'key qualifications' were launched by a future-oriented vision (from early 1970s) that *challenged radically the established structures of vocational qualifications and related patterns of vocational training*. In the further debates the concept was reinterpreted and related to approaches that promote the 'inner modernisation' of vocational qualifications'.
- *In a further stage of debates* the notion 'key qualifications' was related to three kinds of concepts via different *conceptual re-interpretations and* through *a pragmatic 'canonisation'*. Thus *the notion 'key qualification'* has been *either*
  a) *reduced* to particular extension characteristics of individual (vocational) learning (in line with the UK concept of 'key skills'),
  b) *'canonised'* as qualification goals concerning self-organised action within 'organisational learning' cycles (self-organised information retrieving, self-organised planning, self-organised task-implementation, self-organised quality assessment);
  c) *refocused* (and renamed) as an integrated occupational competence (integriertes Handlungskompetenz) which refers to an integrity of specialised knowledge-basis (Fachkompetenz), social and participative competence (Sozialkompetenz) and methodological mastery of new challenges in changing work situations (Methodenkompetenz).

- *From the perspective of curriculum development* the reductionist interpretation (point a) drew attention to *assessment*. The integrative approach (point c) has emerged in the context of curriculum redesign and piloting with 'learning designs' that integrate diverse elements of the curriculum to a '*whole curriculum approach*'. The 'canonisation' has related these two poles to each other with *common quality criteria* that are to be promoted both within curriculum development and within renewal of assessment patterns. It is worthwhile noting that the 'reductionist' position and the 'canonised' interpretation are not necessarily related to a revision of qualification structures. The 'integrative' position is promoting new links both on the level of qualification frameworks and on the level of delivery.
- The *perspective for lifelong learning* is not only related to individual skills development or to being involved in organisational learning. Due to the established qualification structures, the renewal of competence-basis is linked to debates on *career progression models* and on the degree to which the new curricula can contribute to an *'upgrading' of the VET provisions*.

3.3 Instead of a synthesis - some interpretative remarks

The *common denominator* of all types of 'key qualification' debates that have been referred to above is an awareness that the traditional way of defining 'skills', 'competences' or 'qualifications' needs to be supplemented by a qualitatively new level. It is also common to all approaches that the new quality should equip the learners to meet the following kinds of challenges due to rapidly changing working life. From this perspective the following needs are addressed to some extent in all debates but with a different emphasis:

- *readiness to* acquire new knowledge *and to* adjust one's own knowledge-base to new demands;
- *readiness to* adjust one's own knowledge and skills to the demands of 'learning organisations' *and to* contribute to emerging patterns of 'organisational learning';
- *readiness to* adjust oneself to changing career prospects *and to* enhance one's own mobility by means of lifelong learning.

The *differences between the three main strands in 'key qualification debates'* can be related to several underlying factors within the respective cultures of education and training and within the ways that VET is related to working life. In the following some of these factors are analysed to enable mutual exchanges between the 'strands'.

3.3.1 Different approaches for identifying and expressing 'qualification goals'

In different strands there are different basic approaches for identifying the new quality that is required from VET and for expressing it as 'qualification goals':

a) the *'characterological' and atomistic* approaches

The *'characterological' and atomistic approaches* attach the basic concepts ('key skills' or 'key qualifications') to separate characteristics of ideal personality (or of ideal learning outcomes) that are defined as qualification goals. The point of reference is the individual learner and the promotion of individual 'higher order' skills and abilities that are perceived as being context-indifferent. This leads typically to lists of quasi-universal qualification goals (e.g. 'communication', 'application of number' etc.) which are to be attached to the more context-specific qualification goals.

b) the *'constructivist' and holistic* approaches

The *'constructivist' and 'holistic' approaches* attach the basic concepts ('key competences' or 'key qualifications') to new production concepts or to new initiatives for organisational learning. The point of reference is the new demand for qualified and self-organised group work (or work within networks). Therefore, the competences or qualifications of 'higher order' draw the attention to working interfaces between different occupations in such settings and to mastery of joint 'systemic' responsibilities that go beyond each ones' occupational tasks. This is reflected by definitions of such competences that refer to a context and to process-structure but independently of the particular characteristics (i.e. 'self-organised acquisition of information', 'self-organised planning of tasks', 'self-organised implementation of tasks', 'self-organised assessment of the outcomes and the performance').

Another fundamental difference can be distinguished between basic principles for designing curricula. According to the classic distinction of Basil Bernstein (see Bernstein, 1977 [1971] and Fingerle, 1983) the extreme poles can be characterised as different *curricular codes*:

a) the *collection code* and

b) the *integrative code*.

With a particular emphasis on curriculum design for VET the distinction between these poles can be described in the following way:

a) The *collection code* is based on *principles for classification and framing* (of the contents of the curriculum) *that emphasise divisions and distinctions*. Thus, classifications of contents emphasise distinctions between bodies of knowledge (or domains of expertise) and different levels of mastery. Consequently, the framing of the contents provides a 'table of contents' or a 'menu of options' in which different elements of curricula as presented as separate entities.

b) The *integrative code* is based on *principles for classification and framing* (of contents of curriculum) that emphasise *the interplay of diverse elements in the 'whole curriculum'*. Thus, classifications of contents may have introduced clusters of fields of subjects, joint orientative elements and joint summarising elements. Moreover, the framing of the contents may provide room for shared 'working interfaces' or combined 'teaching/learning arrangements' which promote an overview on different options and synergy between complementary fields of expertise.

3.3.2 Differences in 'curriculum regimes' that regulate processes of curriculum development

The third main factor is that the strands are related to different 'curriculum regimes' (i.e. patterns of planning, decision-making and implementation that are related to curricula for VET) that regulate the processes of shaping and redesigning of curricula (as well processes of piloting and experimenting). Following the distinctions that have been made above between one can identify two main types of curriculum regimes:

a) *bipolar curriculum regimes*

Bipolar curriculum regimes are characterised by a *dichotomy between 'framework'* (i.e. the curriculum document that is prepared as a political decision and the related context of policy-preparation and policy-assessment) *and 'coursework'* (the actual curricula that are being implemented in the respective pedagogic contexts).

b) *integrative curriculum regimes*

Integrative curriculum regimes that are characterised by *working interfaces between the renewal of 'frameworks'* (e.g. via experimental model/pilot schemes) *and innovatory redesign projects within the pedagogic contexts* (e.g. as spin-offs from earlier model/pilot schemes or as 'root projects' for generating new schemes).

The *analytical distinction* between two *basic approaches in 'key qualification debates'* and the *respective distinction between 'curricular codes'* and *'curriculum regimes'* gives an impression of fundamental differences. This could easily lead to a conclusion that European cooperation is possible only between closely matching approaches and curricular strategies. However, the preconditions for European cooperation and for within curriculum development are not entirely dependent on the basic approaches and curricular codes. In fact, in the domain of curriculum development there is much more room for flexibility and for mutual learning than one could conclude on the basis the analytical distinctions that have been presented above.

4. NEW VIEWS ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FLEXIBILITY AND KEY QUALIFICATIONS

The following section will explore the general preconditions and some new inputs for European cooperation in the field of curriculum development for VET. The *first sub-section* tries to give a picture of different cultural patterns related to curriculum development. The *second sub-section* provides a bridge from the more general 'flexibility debates' towards a more specific look on flexibility in the context of curriculum development. The *third sub-section* presents three examples how 'key qualification debates' can be transferred to curriculum development initiatives (or provide support for further development of such initiatives).

4.1 New tendencies in curriculum development

In the following some brief remarks will be given on the main characteristics of 'curriculum regimes' and on the recent developments in some Member States. In particular attention is drawn to the particular role that 'key qualification debates' have had in the recent developments. The examples are related to the three main strands of the 'key qualification debates' (see above section 3.2.). The nutshell characterisation of the developments in the *United Kingdom* (primarily referring to England) illustrate a development context in which *curriculum regimes* are essentially *influenced by 'assessment regimes'*. The *'middle strand'* is covered by a set of countries which illustrate different ways of generating *diverse project-based 'innovation spheres'* within curriculum regimes. Finally the *third main strand* of 'key qualification debates' is related to the respective developments in the curriculum regime of the *German VET system* that is *based on the "Beruf" principle and on the corresponding "whole curriculum" approach* (see on the developments in UK the article of Oates and on the "Beruf " principle the article of Reuling in Nijhof/Streumer, 1998).

4.1.1 Curriculum regimes and recent developments in the UK

The traditional features of the curriculum regime (of VET) in the UK arise from the constellation between 'education' and 'training' as the upper track and the lower track of the educational system. In this constellation the upper track has been very strongly profiled as the preparatory phase for higher education (with respectively specialised programmes). Respectively, the lower track has been the segment for secondary options. The attractivity of VET provisions (traditional apprenticeship) was not high and it suffered even more from the collapse of the youth labour market in the late 1970s. Consequently, the curriculum regime within the educational system was characterised by a dichotomy of framework (indicating the range of subjects and the level of attainment that was required) and coursework (which was to be developed locally). In the segment of VET there were different parallel awarding bodies with awards of their own.

- The education and training policies of the 1980s launched new frameworks for more centralised quality control to cover the both general education (the "National Curriculum" - NC) and the VET provisions (the "National Vocational Qualifications" - NVQs). In both cases the main thrust was not to intervene in the pedagogic shaping of teaching/learning environments but to establish national criteria for the assessment of the outcomes. In particular in the domain of VET the new framework was to bring diverse VET provisions under unified quality criteria which were to be developed by relying on the unit-based approach.
- The NVQs were designed to provide an assessment framework for qualifications that were designed for trainees that were to enter directly working life. Thus, the NVQs became more closely attached to the apprentice training and/or to the youth training schemes. However, as a response to a new demand for more polyvalent VET provisions that would open an progression route towards higher education, a parallel framework was introduced (the "General National Vocational Qualifications" - GNVQs). The UK approach of 'core skills' (latterly 'key skills') was established as a part of making the GNVQ framework (and then gradually introduced to the NVQ framework).

- The most recent development is the policy towards unified frameworks for 'education' and 'training'. The policy has already materialised by the merger of the main agencies and it can draw upon the common features of assessment-led curriculum regimes and upon the parallel Scottish developments on modularization as a particular vehicle for unification.

From the perspective of transnational cooperation it is worthwhile to note that the policy towards unification has raised new questions concerning the limitations of previous frameworks and concerning a possible new role for group awards. Moreover, the new policy context requires a closer look at the pedagogic interfaces between 'education' and 'training'.

4.1.2 Curriculum regime and recent developments in the 'middle strand' countries

In the second 'main strand' it is not possible to indicate a common focal point for positioning the 'key qualification debates' in the curriculum regimes (as in the UK-based debates the concept of 'key skills' within the frameworks of NVQs and GNVQs). In the middle strand the respective national debates (on 'key/core/transversal competences') arise from different *'interface areas'* that link the contexts of 'organisational learning' to particular curriculum designs that support these 'interface areas'. Thus, one has to take into account that curriculum regimes for different parts of VET (and CVT) are more parcelled. Moreover, there are different approaches to incorporate such *interface areas as 'vehicles for promoting innovative training and development cooperation'* in the diversified curriculum regimes. Therefore, current tendencies in the 'middle strand' are covered by examples from several countries that illustrate the diversity of patterns.

4.1.2.1 France

In France the policy context for curriculum development is originally based on a three-track system. Consequently, the curriculum regimes for general education, for intermediate ('technological') education and for vocational education and training have been developed separately from each other. Moreover, within the 'vocational' track there is a co-existence between two generations of parallel diplomas (the CAP and the BEP diplomas). Finally, the public intervention to encourage participation in CVT provisions and to link CVT with innovations in working life has taken the shape of diverse support measures beyond curriculum development. In view of this background the links between 'key qualification debates' and the renewal of curriculum regimes can be related to the following developments:

- The major educational policy goal of the 1980s has been to provide an access to the baccalaureat level (entrance qualification to higher education) for 80% of the respective youth cohorts. In addition to the already existing (and closely related) baccalaureats for the general and intemediate tracks (Bac, Bac Tn) this has led to the creation of the specific baccalaureat for the vocational track (Bac Pro). However, the Bac Pro was not introduced as a curricular vehicle to stimulate a unification between the curriculum regimes of the three tracks. Nor was it introduced to replace the existing diplomas of the initial VET. Instead, the Bac Pro was designed as a further education (on top of an initial vocational qualification) that would upgrade the knowledge-base and the competence-base of the trainees either for studies within (vocational) higher education or for work-related competence accumulation.
- Parallel to the introduction of the Bac Pro (with more transversal training profiles) there have been parallel efforts to create more room for transversal learning environments within the initial VET provisions (in particular within the frameworks of the BEP diplomas).
- The major arenas for developing linkages between 'organisational learning' and organised training provisions have been diverse contract-based interfaces between private enterprises and public (or para-public) CVT providers. However, in terms of curriculum development these arrangements are not based on a shared national framework but more often on specific frameworks that have been launched by major CVT providers. At times there have major policy initiatives to develop specific curricular frameworks and new workplace-linked training interfaces. However, these have not promoted a tendency towards an overarching framework to cover the CVT provisions.

- Corollary to some of the above mentioned tendencies there have been efforts to create several kinds of guidance and counselling services that would enhance the awareness of (adult) learners' awareness of their learning potentials and of diverse learning adult-adjusted learning opportunities that are available. 'Key qualification debates' have also been linked to debates on how to link this kind of support to diverse education and training provisions.

4.1.2.2 Denmark

In Denmark general and vocational education have been perceived as two parallel sub-systems of the upper secondary education. However, within the initial vocational education there was a period of co-existence between the traditional apprenticeship model and a experimental 'alternance' model. On the policy level this period was characterised by the decline of the older model and problems of acceptance related to the newer model. Corollary to these contradictions within the initial VET the national authorities for employment policy were developing a separate infrastructure for public CVT provisions (the regional AMU Centres). From the perspective of curriculum development these CVT provisions were linked to the traditional category of semi-skilled workers and to the respective training profiles. Concerning recent developments and in particular concerning the development of the 'curriculum regimes' the following tendencies are worth noting:

- In the beginning of the 1990s the two parallel models for the initial VET were merged into one basic model which provided a unified curricular framework for trainees (with an apprentice contract) and pupils (taken into schemes with an 'alternance' structure). Concerning the 'curriculum regime' the role of national (tripartite) curriculum commissions was limited to setting the qualification goals whereas regional VET colleges were encouraged to make their own designs - in particular concerning interfaces with workplaces or concerning simulation-based practical training periods. This kind of curricular empowerment was accompanied by the new regime for financing (which abolished fixed regional recruitment areas and invited the VET colleges to a competition on a national 'training market'. The implementation of this reform was accompanied by supporting provisions of in-service training and consultancy for the VET colleges.
- Parallel to these developments there has been a movement within the public CVT (AMU) provisions to develop interfaces between standard courses and 'organisational learning' projects within client enterprises. This movement has been supported by accompanying research projects which have focused both on the organisational and pedagogic aspects of such interfaces. Recently, an official government report has summarised the outcomes of the main research projects and proposed conclusions for the further development of the curriculum regime of the public CVT (AMU) provisions. The main feature of these projects has been to support the development of the AMU centres into support structures that are capable to coach the 'organisational learning' projects that are to be launched alongside the standard AMU courses.

4.1.2.3 The Netherlands

In the Netherlands education policy has been traditionally based on a multi-track system both on the lower secondary and on the upper secondary level. Within the sub-system for VET there is a coexistence between a well-established segment of school-based VET provisions and a relatively strong segment of apprentice training. However, due to new demands in emerging sectors and due to particular needs of special target groups there was a need to introduce a separate infrastructure for adapted (short-cycled) VET programmes. Moreover, in order to serve the needs of immigrants and other target groups in the labour markets there was a need to expand public CVT provisions which also included components of general adult education.

In the 1990s several successive policy initiatives have been taken to introduce more coherence in the VET system and to promote organisational synergy and flexibility on the regional level.

The most essential measures and their respective implications for the integration of the 'curriculum regime' for VET have been the following ones:

- The first merger operation within the initial VET (the "SVM-operatie" of the early 1990s) introduced a new curricular framework that subsumed the existing programmes under 4 macro-sectors (technological, agricultural, economic and administrative, health and service sector). Moreover, it launched a campaign to merge the monosectoral colleges for traditional VET programmes with the multi-sectoral colleges that provided short-cycled programmes.
- The successive merger operation (the "BVE-operatie" of the early/mid 1990s) covered the whole range of initial VET as well as the public provisions for adult education and CVT. The aim of this operation was to create strong regional colleges which covered the whole range of training provisions within initial VET and CVT and which were able to allocate and reallocate their resources to the kinds of provisions that could best match current and prospective needs in the respective regions.
- The regional implementation of the merger operation was stimulated with a new mode of funding which was related to a target size of colleges (with reference to the kind of programmes they were providing) and to an innovation plan which was to demonstrate how the colleges were responding to particular regional needs. Corollary to the introduction of the new mode of regional planning there was a campaign to encourage a transition towards a German-like "dual" model of delivery (or similar cooperation arrangements that would ensure appropriate opportunities for practical learning).
- Parallel to the organisational mergers the national tripartite curriculum commissions were merged to one set of sectoral bodies with a joint commission. On conceptual level this paved the way to a transition from separate sets of qualification goals towards a coherent national qualification structure. Recently, special efforts have been made to avoid making too close linkages between the qualification goals and actual curricula and to make room for innovative shaping of the curricula (e.g. by launching national support programmes). In particular emphasis has been given to the need to incorporate 'key qualifications' in the curricula with learning designs that create linkages between different elements of the curricula.

4.1.3 Curriculum regime and recent developments in Germany

In Germany the 1969 legislation and the creation of the national agency (BBF, latterly BiBB) to support the development of the VET system provided a crucial turning point in the 'curriculum regime'. On the basis of the said legislation and due to the support of the national agency for VET-related research and development there was a possibility to proceed towards a reshaping of occupational profiles and to introduce modern patterns of curriculum development. At the same time this turning point introduced the principle of tripartite participation in the decision-making on the training regulations. In the 'curriculum regime' the dual model of organising the VET provisions was transferred by the duality between curricula for the workplace-based learning (to be established on the federal level) and syllabi for the school-based learning (to be established on the level of federal states). The process of giving a shape to a modern 'curriculum regime' and the subsequent steps to adjust it to quite recent challenges can be characterised in the following way:

- The first phase (1970s and early 1980s) was characterised by conceptual preparation of the new frameworks for broader occupational fields and for regrouping the specialised occupations to be developed as ramifications that are based on a common foundation phase. The process of preparing the political (tripartite) consensus was also characterised by stock-taking from several sets of model/pilot schemes (in which different aspects of the emerging concept were piloted).
- The political consensus was first reached in some 'pioneering' sectors and formulated in the 'prototyping' training regulations (in the mid-1980s). In these regulations the 'canonised'

interpretation of key qualifications (see above) was given as a thorough-going principle for the development of curricula, teaching/learning environments and the assessment of learning outcomes. The emphasis of piloting was shifted to the transfer of the new concepts to other sectors, to different 'vehicular designs' to improve teaching/learning arrangements and/or to create linkages between different part of the curricula and to development of new patterns of assessment.

- In the most recent generation of model/pilot schemes and in the subsequent training regulations new structures have been introduced that go beyond the earlier 'modernisation'. In some of these concepts different occupations have been grouped into combined training arrangements which reflect a common systemic or organisational core (to which the respective specialised trajectories are related). In some cases such models have been introduced for related groups of occupations (e.g. the cluster of occupations related to maintenance and marketing of computer systems). In other cases such models have been introduced for different occupations that can be combined in production-relevant teaching/learning environments (with a common organisational reference structure).

4.2 Implications of 'flexibility debates' on curriculum development

As has been indicated, several major reforms in initial VET and within CVT are underway in many countries. These reforms can be characterised by an emphasis on free access, varied pathways, fewer specialisations, modularised curricula, new teaching and learning methods to enable students to adequately react on core problems in their working situation by applying broad applicable key qualifications in combination with occupation and/or job specific knowledge and skills.

The responsiveness of vocational education and training relates to the opportunities for vocational education and training to react to all sorts of unpredictable changes on the labour market. Recent research of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) reflect a clear, rational and deliberate effort to design curricula for occupational flexibility. These respective curriculum designs have been and continue to be developed in response to changes in occupational profiles and employment patterns characteristic of many industrialised and developing economies world-wide (Chrosciel and Plumbridge, 1995).

The measure of responsiveness of vocational education and training institutions can be observed in the external flexibility and the internal flexibility of an institution. By external flexibility is meant the way institutions respond to the changes in the labour market. Internal flexibility concerns all the efforts an institution is making to meet the external flexibility. These efforts concern besides necessary organisational changes innovations in the education and training programmes. In relation to this curricular flexibility; flexibility of delivery and flexibility of pathways is discussed here.

4.2.1 Curricular flexibility

In fact, this is more than one dimension, since we can identify curricular flexibility over time, across space and across individuals. Curricular flexibility over time refers to the capacity of vocational education to update its curricula in response to changing skill needs. Flexibility across space is the ability to tailor programmes to respond to local circumstances and local labour markets. Flexibility across individuals involves tailoring programmes to respond to student choice, or to meet the particular needs of individual students, especially the disadvantaged. Curricular flexibility may be pursued through modularization or other changes in the structure of the curriculum, through decentralising control in education, through a greater reliance on the `market' to ensure responsiveness to economic changes and through promoting closer links with the world of work, at national and local levels.

4.2.2 Flexibility of delivery

Flexibility of delivery allows different students to follow the same curriculum by different methods, contexts, or time periods. It should enable the system to cater for and attract students with different backgrounds and circumstances, and especially adults, disadvantaged students and dropouts or those at risk of dropping out, for whom conventional styles of delivery are less suitable.

Flexibility of delivery can also be a way to reduce costs and increase efficiency; only the outcomes of education are fixed and the market can be used to see that these are achieved in the cheapest way. Flexibility of delivery may be pursued by encouraging greater diversity of pedagogic approaches and institutions providing education, by introducing or expanding apprenticeships, by encouraging open learning and work-based learning, by decentralising control, by fostering `markets' in education and training and by introducing systems of funding and control based `outcomes' which allow inputs or processes to vary more freely.

It is thus possible to achieve flexibility of delivery by varying teaching methods and the place where learning takes place. These possibilities will be examined further because there are currently a great many developments taking place in these areas of attention, partly under the influence of the social developments mentioned above.

4.2.2.1 The place where learning takes place

The place where learning takes place is very important for the degree of transfer of what has been learned. Application in the world of work of qualifications acquired in vocational education and training leaves something to be desired. Moreover, vocational education at school is not suitable for the learning of certain key qualifications, such as the ability to cope with stress. For good vocational training, it is necessary for the learning potential in work situations to be increased; work situations must be made pedagogical and school situations must be contextualised (see Nieuwenhuis and Onstenk, 1994). However, it is worthwhile to note that not only formal, but also informal opportunities for in-service learning and training are receiving increasing attention.

4.2.2.2 Teaching methods

Attention is then focused on the contextualising school situations mentioned above. Teaching methods are the means to arouse and stimulate learning processes. Today it is increasingly often assumed that the teaching method used has an influence on the learning process and consequently on the output factor. It is assumed that for the development of competent, flexible, and broadly-skilled employees, the teaching method is just as important as the learning content. The forms of learning that are mentioned in this context are simulation (the firm used for practice) (Achtenhagen, 1992; Achtenhagen and John, 1992), problem-oriented training (Van Woerden, 1991), the Leittext method (Van den Sanden 1993a, 1993b) and task-oriented teaching methods (context-linked learning), such as learning in open and complex learning situations (Laur-Ernst, 1984; Heidegger and Rauner, 1989), learning from core problems (Onstenk et al., 1990), team learning (cooperative learning). These forms of learning have many characteristics in common (see Odenthal, 1997).

4.2.3 Flexibility of pathways

This involves more open access to education, weaker divisions between students in different tracks or areas of study, easier transfer, and more diversity in the occupational or educational destinations to which each pathway may lead. This should enable vocational education to attract more students, to cope with the uncertainty of future occupational demands or skill needs, to keep individual options open and to raise the status of vocational education (Raffe, 1994). Flexibility of pathways may be pursued by curricular changes to increase breadth and defer specialisation, by modularization, by credit transfer systems, by measures to weaken the boundaries between vocational and general education and to build bridges between them, and by more open arrangements for access, including the recognition of prior learning.

4.3 Approaches to link 'key qualification debates' to curriculum development

The previous explorations have indicated that the three main strands are linked to different concepts of curriculum development (see sections 3.2. and 3.3.). Moreover, the explorations on 'curriculum regimes' (section 4.1.) have demonstrated that initiatives that are related to 'key qualification debates' have different anchorage points in the established patterns and that the reform tendencies that the debates are promoting may have a different impact on the 'curriculum regime'. Finally, the reflections on the particular curriculum-related consequences of the 'flexibility' debates show that there is a broad menu of policy-measures that can be given a different weight in the national strategies for promoting 'key qualifications' and flexibility.

From the perspective of European co-operation, it is important that such initiatives are related to each other in a dialogue that

- enables a proper understanding of the underlying preconditions for curriculum development in diverse countries (and a well-based assessment of prospects for curriculum (re)design projects);
- makes transparent the main thrust and the main instruments of the innovatory approach;
- creates awareness of practical possibilities to develop synergy between mutually enforcing initiatives and creates a basis for transfer of innovatory designs.

In order to simulate such a reflection the following sub-sections discuss three kinds of (hypothetical or actual) starting points for European cooperation initiatives that can be discussed in the context of 'key qualification debates'. The intention is not to suggest any priorities between the different kinds of initiatives approaches. Instead, the intention is to make transparent some preconditions for and limits to successful cooperation.

4.3.1 Development of 'core curricula' for VET

The idea of developing 'core curricula' for VET has been often discussed in hypothetical terms) as a possible working perspective for European cooperation projects. However, there has been little interest to try to draft a framework for a "European core curriculum" that would be adequate for the diverse VET provisions. Instead, there has been some discussion on particular ideas that could be developed towards European 'core curriculum' initiatives.

Very often such hypothetical discussions take the UK debates on 'key skills' and modular frameworks for curricula as their starting points. Consequently the task for a European cooperation project would be to agree to a common list of 'key skills units' which would be promoted by corresponding 'key skill modules' that could be presented as a proposal for a 'European core curriculum'. However, this kind of project design would develop appropriate tools and instruments only for the kind of 'curriculum regimes' in which separate 'key skills units' and modularization are part of the established 'curriculum regime'. Moreover, they would ignore the kind of curriculum designs that promote 'key/core competences' or 'key qualifications' by initiatives that penetrate the 'whole curriculum'.

Instead of taking the task of developing models for a 'European core curriculum' the Leonardo project "Coreguide" has chosen a less ambitious approach. First the project has provided 'state of the art' reports that provide a picture of the national 'key qualification debates'. Then, on the basis of these working documents the project has developed a mapping instrument for presenting examples of innovatory practice in a compact form. Finally, the project has produced information on innovatory cases to be presented in the mapping instrument.

Thus, the "Coreguide" project has produced reference documents and tools for any further initiatives that aim to develop 'core curricula' for VET. However, in view of the diversity of 'key qualification debates' and 'curriculum regimes' it is obvious that such projects should take a pluralistic position vis-à-vis different preconditions for curriculum development.

Such a position can be developed e.g. for the following kinds of alternative approaches:

- Instead of trying to define both common goals and common 'core elements' for a 'European core curriculum' it is possible to identify *alternative ways to common goals*. Thus, instead of trying to define a uniform pattern for common 'core elements' it is possible to *develop alternative sets of 'core contents'* which refer to different kinds of curricular frameworks (with different formats).
- Instead of trying to give ready-made shapes to the assumed 'core contents' it is also possible to identify *common 'core principles' for curriculum (re)design*. Then, it would be the task of the European cooperation projects to transform the common core principles into actual curriculum designs (and to *analyse the outcomes* of such transformation in different national contexts).

4.3.2 Analysis of occupational core problems as a tool for 'situative' curriculum development

Another working perspective is to develop tools for analysing crucial problems in the context of occupational work. The main thrust of such *'core problems'* approaches is to analyse the situative aspects of skilled work performance (that is required by 'learning organisations') and transfer these aspects to curriculum development. In the following an exemplary description is given on the basic reasoning underpinning such an approach.

Onstenk et al. (1990) define as 'core problems' the central characteristics of the vocational task in which considerations, choices and decisions are demanded of the employee. These are considerations and choices relating to dilemmas where the application of knowledge and skills, and the use of a correct register of actions will determine whether someone is a more or a less professional employee. An expert in such a situation can act rapidly and effectively, on the basis of a repertoire of experiences of similar situations. Core problems, most typically, are those moments in the practice of work when key qualifications are required. Core problems have a (vocational) *skill-related and a situative component*.

- The *skill-related component* involves the identification of the various dimensions of the problem, of possible inconsistencies, of the importance of various elements, of the necessity for reasoned choices, etc. This component touches upon the task areas (core tasks) of the curriculum.
- The *situative component* refers to the strategic and social dimension in the concrete performance of a task. Strategic behaviour is necessary because a certain task or activity is always performed in a certain situation, in which it is not sufficient to fall back on a particular set of rules for decision-making, but in which decisions, choices and considerations have to be made which fit that specific situation. Social behaviour, oriented towards people, is also characterised by uncertainty and cannot be formalised.

The 'core problems' approaches are not directly contributing to curriculum designs. However, they provide frameworks that specify the organisational and contextual aspects (that are central for the debates on 'key/core competences') and make it possible to relate them to vocational curricula. Moreover, they provide frameworks for interpreting the relevance of some pedagogic designs that promote self-organised learning (e.g. the 'Leittext' applications) in the context of organisational learning.

4.3.3 Development of 'complex teaching/learning arrangements' or 'integrative working and learning assignments'

The third kind of working perspective is related to curriculum redesign approaches that have a focal project area and are based on the work of accompanying research and development projects. In such cases the research work that is in-built in the process of curriculum redesign has the task of supporting the development work (but also of creating the awareness of shortcomings and of the limits of transferability). This kind of project is usually developed to a certain degree as national pilot projects (or model/pilot schemes) and the level of European cooperation may then serve as a platform for further analyses of transferability.

In the following, two examples will be given of such projects with somewhat similar research and development approaches. The first one (which focuses on development of *complex teaching/learning arrangements)* refers primarily (although not exclusively) to school-based learning environments. The latter one (with a focus on development of *integrative working and learning assignments)* refers to collaboration between school-based education and workplace-based training. Both of them have first been launched as national model/pilot schemes. In a later phase they have either themselves launched a broader European platform or joined European cooperation projects as national counterparts:

- The University of Göttingen supported and accompanied a model/pilot scheme that focused on development of *complex teaching/learning arrangements* for commercial education (in the early 1990s). In the initial phase the curriculum redesign focused on two content areas (business administration and accountancy). In the redesign process these were converted to (simulation-based) complex teaching/learning arrangements which required a great amount of self-organised involvement of trainees. Later on the redesign process has transformed other elements of curricula to similar teaching/learning arrangements or to case studies etc. that are linked to an covering narrative framework for the 'activity dimension' of the curriculum. On the basis of this prior experience the university of Göttingen has been developing (in collaboration with the university of Twente and the university of Edinburgh) an international initiative within the framework of the COST Programme. The project explores similar initiatives in 16 countries.
- The university of Bremen (research institute ITB) is supporting and accompanying an ongoing model/pilot scheme in southern Brandenburg (Schwarze Pumpe). The main aim of the experimental curriculum is to provide an entrance qualification to (vocational) higher education (Fachhochschulreife) corollary to the regulated qualification of a skilled worker (Berufsausbildung). In the experimental curriculum a particular role has been given to *integrative 'working and learning assignments'* which link the subject-based components to workplace-related assignments that provide focal points for the whole curriculum development. This model/pilot scheme has also provided a basis for the national contribution of the ITB in several European cooperation projects (in particular in the Leonardo-projects "Post-16 strategies" and "Intequal").

The involvement of the said projects in European cooperation provides an example of how such approaches (which are originally developed as redesigns within 'whole curriculum' framework) can provide and can contribute to mutual learning and exchanges of ideas with European partners that work under different preconditions.

5. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS: ELEMENTS FOR NEW EUROPEAN 'WORKING AGENDAS'

5.1 Structural problems as new policy contexts for 'key qualification debates'

In previous sections the recent 'key qualification debates' have been related to the more general theme 'flexibility'. In this context the 'key qualification debates' have had a preventive or a prospective function. On the one hand there has been an expectation that the new concepts could effectively prevent VET systems from getting into structural difficulties and facilitate inner reforms. On the other, there has been an expectation that the new concepts could provide a basis for new solutions which could compensate partly the problems that have occurred in the traditional VET provisions. In this respect the debates have been accompanied by an optimistic atmosphere and by an innovatory effort to find future-oriented solutions.

However, recent policy debates on VET (and in particular on the development of initial VET systems) give a general picture of fundamental structural problems. The general character is that VET systems (as border systems between the educational system and the labour market) are subject to structural pitfalls and to contradictory expectations. Often these difficulties tend to be related to each other as problem constellations. In the following, some of these structural problem constellations are discussed briefly:

5.1.1 The double function of VET as an option within the educational system and as an entry to labour market

Recently initial VET provisions have been facing a twofold problem: on the one hand they have been suffering from a disparity of esteem (as a "lower track" of the educational system). This has led to an increasing social demand for education that provides an access to higher education. The general response in many educational policies has been the expansion of the general or 'academic' provisions or the introduction of 'middle track' provisions. As a consequence, graduates of these provisions are increasingly opting for higher education or demanding higher (post-secondary) vocational provisions (*"academic drift"*).

At the same time the initial VET provisions have been experiencing difficulties in providing immediate or adequate access to the labour market. This has either weakened the interest in traditional VET provisions (*"opting out -drift"*) or encouraged efforts to create new vocational progression routes towards higher (vocational) education. Thus, the difficulties with the entry to the labour market are either reducing the effectivity and credibility of initial VET as an entry point. Either it has the risk of being considered a 'parking place' (without a real perspective to labour market) or as a 'transit phase' within alternative pathways towards higher education.

5.1.2 The decreasing number of work-related training opportunities and the increasing demand for adequate work experience

As a consequence of the recent tendencies towards 'systemic rationalisation' in enterprises ("lean organisations", "outsourcing") there are increasing difficulties in finding scope for work-related training opportunities. The tendency towards outsourcing the training leaves the remaining companies (which continue their training activities) as recruitment pools for competitors. With this kind of 'opting out' tendency there is a risk of a self-enforcing vicious circle.

At the same time, due to the very same rationalisation tendencies, the labour markets put greater emphasis on actual work experience on top of formal (vocational) qualifications. However, when enterprises are generally reducing their direct involvement in initial VET, it is getting increasingly difficult to bridge this gap between existing opportunities for work-related learning and growing demands for actual work experience.

5.1.3 The increasing need for a well-structured and well-focused training and for measures to prepare for alternative employment prospects

The third problem constellation arises from the tendencies that have been mentioned above. On the one hand, the growing demand for adequate work experience (or 'work process knowledge') requires well-structured and well-focused training programmes. On the other, it has become obvious that completion of VET programmes (or acquisition of higher qualifications) does not increase employment opportunities in the traditional labour markets or create automatically new employment opportunities. Therefore, there is a need to design the VET systems in such a way that they support mobility beyond the original focus of the initial VET. Moreover, there is a need for providers of VET to launch support measures to facilitate transition to working life (e.g. through preparing for self-employment and supporting job-creation initiatives).

5.1.4 The difficulty for providers of VET to keep apace with changing demands of 'learning organisations' and the need to adjust training with the perspective of constant changes in working life

The traditional interpretation of the function of initial VET as a provider of ready-to-work employees (and as a provider of a relatively solid orientation ground for a further career in working life) is increasingly challenged by constant changes in working life - in particular in 'learning organisations'. From this perspective, external providers of VET are increasingly lagging concerning the actual technology and the knowledge-basis that is being developed and utilised in the forefront of developing and using new technologies. Therefore, the assumption that VET provisions could serve as vehicles for the insertion of new technologies and related competences is hardly valid for such sectors in which there are the best prospects for job growth.

However, because of this fact, an adjustment to continuing technological changes and a need to contribute to a culture of 'organisational learning' (that enables the organisations to master such changes) becomes increasingly necessary for the providers of VET.

5.1.5 Limited prospects of VET provisions as training opportunities for their traditional clients (and difficulties in getting new clients)

In many countries providers of VET have been very clearly adjusted to certain traditional client groups with a distinct social status and a respective career expectation. In view of the demographic tendencies and in view of the competition pressures (between academic drift and opting out drift) it is obvious that such VET providers that are only limited to their traditional clientele cannot expect to be successful in the future.

In order to ensure their possibilities in view of the current changes, providers of VET need to extend their activities beyond traditional qualifications of initial VET and to create new (bridging) provisions either within the educational system or as 'training and development' partnerships that include also CVT provisions. This requires new efforts to make the new arrangements acceptable within the educational system or among the potential counterparts in working life. This also requires a new kind of organisational responsiveness and flexibility among the providers of VET.

All these problem constellations indicate that an adequate development of VET systems cannot be based on an isolated view of the inner modernisation of current VET provisions with reference to their traditional clients. Instead, structural rethinking is needed - but it has to be based on initiatives that link internal modernisation to structural innovations as well as innovations within the pedagogic and curricular renewal of VET.

5.2 Coordinates for European 'working agendas' for the modernisation of VET

The problem constellations that have been discussed above indicate that all major VET systems are challenged to search for new solutions. Moreover, they are challenged to take measures that go beyond the traditional scope of developing existing VET frameworks (or beyond introduction of particular new provisions within the existing frameworks). The awareness of the need for deeper changes is growing in the recent debates on national level.

A particular indication of such problem awareness is a new kind of interest in cross-cultural comparisons and in transnational cooperation projects. Previously such projects have often provided the participating countries demonstrative platforms for presenting the advantages of their respective VET systems. In more recent projects there is more effort to learn from each others' models and from the underlying culture of VET. Moreover, there is a growing awareness that such learning does not need to result in transplantation of 'alien' models as such. Instead, the kind of 'mutual learning' that has been taking place in recent European cooperation projects is opening prospects for new 'transitional spaces' between different system models. In some cases such cooperation projects are paving the way for new patterns of piloting, experimenting and promoting the transfer of innovations.

In the following, some reflections will be presented on how to proceed from the current state of 'flexibility debates' and 'key qualification debates' towards more focused transnational cooperation projects (that could respond to the new challenges that have been discussed above). These reflections will not be presented as direct proposals for the agenda-setting of new European cooperation programmes. Instead, they are presented as tentative 'working agendas' for CEDEFOP for the purpose of accompanying the ongoing and forthcoming work of European cooperation projects and for summarising the outcomes for broader European reflection.

The 'working agendas' are related to three levels of modernisation in European VET systems and try to indicate how different starting positions can be brought into dialogue within European cooperation. In particular the 'working agendas' try to indicate in what way the 'flexibility debates' and 'key qualification debates' can be developed further on these respective levels. The levels in question are the following:

5.2.1 The level of inner (conceptual) modernisation of VET

Concerning the level of *inner (conceptual) modernisation* there is a tendency to seek more flexibility beyond the traditional formats of vocational qualifications. In recent years all major VET systems have tried to adjust themselves to constant changes by modular frameworks or by holistic frameworks that are based on broad occupational foundations and on successive specialisation. In recent development initiatives new models have been developed in order to regroup related occupational profiles on an alternative basis. Such tendencies can be seen in VET cultures that rely on holistic concepts as well as in VET cultures that rely on atomistic concepts.

Within *holistic VET cultures* there are tendencies to review the traditional perception of occupational core structures. A symptomatic example is provided by the recent German training regulations in the domain '*information and communication technologies*'. The new occupations are no longer related to a traditional occupational main field (e.g. 'technical' or 'commercial' field). Instead they are introduced as special trajectories that are attached to a *joint core structure* that refers to the '*system-related*' knowledge .) Corollary to such new features, there are initiatives to introduce new kinds of core structures ("core qualifications") that would open the skilling process for organisational adjustment and for mobility. These ideas are closely related to reflective uses of modularisation.

Within *atomistic VET cultures* there is new interest on 'group awards' and on curricular strategies to avoid excessive fragmentisation of vocational learning processes. In particular this interest is linked to the fact that merely unit-based assessment frameworks do not give a picture of competence accumulation within integrated organisational working and learning contexts.

5.2.2 The level of structural modernisation of VET

Concerning *structural modernisation of VET* the new challenges are raising the question whether (initial) VET systems in the future can fulfil their function effectively *if* they only maintain the accustomed patterns. If they merely concentrate on their traditional target groups (sticking to accustomed divisions within the educational systems and preparing their clients only for accustomed career prospects) they run a risk of losing their attractivity and of becoming isolated. In this respect the following tendencies towards rethinking can be noted:

5.2.2.1

Policy approaches that try to enhance the *educational attractivity of* initial *VET* are making efforts to improve *parity of esteem* between general and vocational options of upper secondary education. From the perspective of 'key qualification debates' it is worthwhile to note that these approaches have to find answers to the following kind of questions:

- Is it possible to introduce structural frameworks (and curricular constructs) which link in an integrative way the qualification goals '*access to higher education*' and '*access to working life as a skilled worker*'?
- Is it possible to develop such '*vocational progression routes*' towards higher education or towards higher qualifications that would help to overcome the status gaps between the general/academic and vocational options?

5.2.2.2

Policy approaches that try to enhance the role of VET (and CVT) provisions as support for organisational *innovations and* for *lifelong learning within working life* have to answer the following kinds of questions:

- Is it possible to develop such cooperation arrangements between providers of VET and CVT that support equally a culture of 'organisational learning' *and* individual competence-accumulation *in a systematic way*?
- Is it possible to incorporate such 'training and development' cooperation arrangements as within curricula that lead to higher (vocational) qualifications?

5.2.2.3

Policy approaches that try to enhance the role of VET (and CVT) provisions as support for job-creation and for finding new employment opportunities have to answer the following kind of questions:

- Is it possible to develop the frameworks of initial VET in such a way that the trainees are preparing themselves for alternative occupational prospects and can themselves influence their range of mobility?
- Is it possible to link support schemes for job-creation and self-employment to frameworks that support a systematic accumulation of competences?

5.2.3 The level of pedagogic and curricular modernisation of VET.

Concerning *pedagogic and curricular modernisation of VET* there is a need to respond to the challenges that arise from the conceptual and structural 'modernisation agendas' but also a need to reflect some new additional questions. In the following some main questions of this level are raised for further discussion:

- The emerging debates concerning the inner (conceptual) modernisation of VET raise immediately the question of a new kind of *'strategy mixes'* between holistic frameworks and flexible (e.g. modular) forms of delivery. Consequently, there is a need to reflect what kind of *transitional models* are needed in diverse curriculum regimes to give shape for piloting and provide conclusions on experimental implementation (in order to give a sufficient pedagogic and curricular articulation of the proposed 'paradigm shifts').
- The debates on *'parity of esteem'* (between general/academic and vocational education) raise the issue of *new curricular codes* that take into account the following aspects:

a) the necessity *to reconsider 'general education'* in order to achieve a balance between 'transparency of knowledge structures', 'command of actually relevant knowledge', 'access to knew knowledge' and 'experience in retrieving and processing new knowledge' within curricular frameworks;

b) the necessity to develop *curricular 'coding and decoding' approaches* that facilitate relating *'subject-based knowledge' and 'work process knowledge'* to each other as parallel strands of knowledge accumulation within vocational learning processes;

c) the necessity to develop *quality criteria to assess the extended potentials of aggregated or linked curricular constructs* (e.g. 'complex teaching/learning arrangements' or 'integrative working and learning assignments' or 'network-supported decentral learning environments') in order to identify their relative advantages and deficiencies in comparison with each other and in comparison to traditional models of teaching and training.

- The *debates on new* (multimedial) *environments for learning* and the prospects with new computer literacy require particular strategic approaches for including the potentials of 'civic' multimedial learning and a related support for progress in developing learning-relevant uses (and user-applications) of new media (see on this aspect the article of Straka in this volume).
- The *debates on new* (self-organised or participative) *learning cultures* require special strategic approaches for creating adequate spaces for self-organised planning and socio-cultural participation (both concerning the making of actual curriculum as well as within particular components of the curricula). Concerning the mission of vocational education and training it is necessary to reflect what kind of curricular interpretation can be given to the perspective of 'social shaping of work, technology and human involvement'.
- The *demands to improve the prospects of progression and mobility* (on the basis of initial VET) require more than a strategic readiness for new curriculum (re)designs within the respective domain of VET. In the future it is of crucial importance that the measures that are introduced to facilitate mobility and progression find resonance within the 'receiving' social environments (either in higher education or in work organisations and among providers of CVT). Moreover, it is of crucial importance that there will be no major discrepancies between the respective principles of recognition of the outcomes of learning. (See on this point the article of J. Björnavold on the validation of prior learning in this volume).

5.3 Concluding questions for further synthesis work

As has already been indicated, the aim of this article has not been to conclude a debate with a 'European synthesis'. Instead, the previous explorations have provided frameworks to analyse national debates and to contextualise them in a European 'group picture'. Finally, the article has provided some additional coordinates ('working agendas') with which it is possible explore in what contexts 'learning from each other' can be facilitated within policy-development for VET systems.

In further reports this approach has to be developed further on the basis of actual research results and learning experiences of transnational cooperation projects. Parallel to such elaboration there is a need to reflect the following kind of questions:

a) How can research in the domain of curriculum development affect the design of teaching and learning arrangements?

In what ways can research contribute to curriculum planning, to curriculum implementation and to curriculum redesign? What kind of relations and feedback mechanisms can be developed between the spheres of 'research', 'policy' and 'practice'? What kind of conceptual, 'doctrinal' or 'paradigmatic' implications may these have?

- b) ***How can different institutional constellations between policy frameworks and curriculum development be taken into account in transnational cooperation?***

  How can transnational cooperation projects reach a level of reporting that they are informative concerning innovative cases but also reflective concerning underlying policy frameworks and 'leading ideas'? How can transnational cooperation projects be facilitated in mutual learning? How can the outcomes of transnational cooperation projects be delivered in such a way that the 'processes of mutual learning' give support for further innovation transfer?

- c) ***How can dialogue between different leading ideas concerning curriculum development (and design of actual learning environments) be facilitated?***

To what extent are leading ideas on curriculum development (in particular systemic and cultural contexts) establishing themselves as 'paradigms' which tend to exclude alternative models? What kind of models for dialogue between different 'paradigms' can be introduced and what kind of processes of 'paradigm shift' can be observed? What kind of role can particular case studies (on innovatory pilot models in curriculum (re)design) have for such processes?

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NEW LEARNING FORMATS AND VENUES IN THE CONTEXT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Multimedia, hypermedia, Internet and the World Wide Web as an Information Super Highway are synonyms for developments in the field of information and communication technologies. These 'new media' have led to an almost boundless optimism where the optimizing of both teaching and learning is concerned. One of a number of hypotheses held in this context is that the new media lead to new learning formats and venues in general and especially in vocational training. This hypothesis will be examined from a learning-teaching-theoretical perspective within the framework of this contribution.

Firstly we need to define both the terms 'learning' and 'media', following which we will analyse the learning-teaching-theoretical potential of the 'new media'. Using the hypertext/hypermedia systems as well as 'on-line learning' in the World Wide Web (WWW) as examples, the effects the new media have on learning formats and venues as well as on the social forms of learning will be demonstrated. And finally, we will examine what new core skills are made necessary when learning with new media and in what way these skills may be furthered. By way of an example, two approaches of furthering these key qualifications will be described.

2. INTERACTION, INFORMATION AND LEARNING

Continuous interaction with the socio-historical environment characterizes an individual's life span. Signals and stimuli reach the individual, some of which are perceived. These signals, however, have no meaning by themselves, but it is rather the individual who associates a meaning to these signals according to the current state of his or her 'internal conditions'. By associating a meaning to perceived signals, inner behaviour is realized and information produced.

Internal conditions or dispositions consist of the individual's declarative and procedural knowledge about the world and about the individual himself. Declarative knowledge consists of knowledge about the state of the world (What is the world like?) and the individual (Who am I?). Declarative knowledge consists of knowledge about how the world and the individual may be changed (Straka, 1983; Straka and Macke, 1979). Another term for this type of knowledge is skill. Skills may be more content related (= epistimic structure) or less content related (= heuristic structure or problem-solving skills; Dörner, 1976).

Information is actually created by the individual; there is no objective information. Information is idiosyncratically constructed by the individual. On the other hand, behaviour, activity and operations are not possible without a connection with information, whilst at the same time, behaviour is not possible without information. This interconnection or event describes the core of information processings as a functional unit in which the elements information and behaviour are interconnected. The flow of these elements is an interdependent sequence with the following structure: information x behaviour x information x behaviour ... etc (Macke and Straka, 1981).

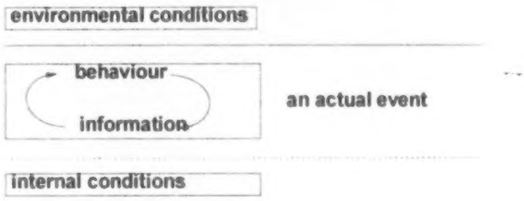
Behaviour is unique and consumes itself. Behaviour may be observable (externalized) and non-observable (internalized behaviour). Only information, however, is storable, that is to say behaviour may only be transformed in a storable state of knowledge about behaviour. For this reason, we use the term 'procedural knowledge' as a part of the internal conditions.

To summarize, the permanent, life-long individual-environment relationship consists of three levels:

- the socio-historical environment or external conditions,
- the actual events such as the functional unit of information and behaviour which characterize the information processing, and
- the internal conditions.

Diagram 1:

Individual-environment-relationship


environmental conditions
behaviour
information
an actual event
internal conditions

individual-environment-relationship

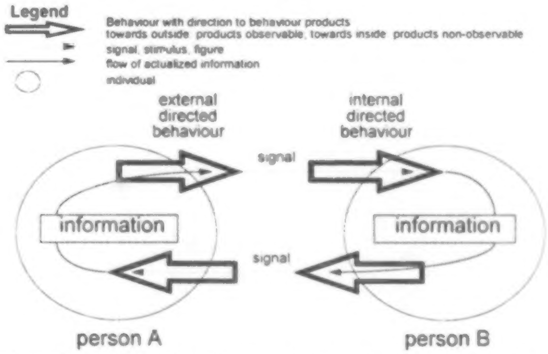
As long as the incoming information created is in accordance with the knowledge structure of the individual, an assimilation process is realized. This characterizes a one-way interaction, for example with a book, a message on a screen, etc. Such an interaction is mostly associated with motivation and emotion. If discrepencies occur, however, an accomodation process may follow.

Another step might be realized, however, by the individual in externalizing the behaviour. In just the same way as incoming information, it reaches the 'other' in the form of signals which he or she might perceive and give meaning to, and so a new cycle of potential information exchange might occur. The other might be a person or an environmental configuration such as an interactive computer-based multimedia module, etc.

On the basis of these considerations, dyadic interaction may be presented with the following structure:

Diagram 2:

Basic model of dyadic interaction


Legend
Behaviour with direction to behaviour products
towards outside: products observable, towards inside: products non-observable
signal, stimulus, figure
flow of actualized information
individual
external directed behaviour
internal directed behaviour
signal
information
information
signal
person A
person B

Basic model of dyadic interaction (interaction: behaviour x information)

To summarize, the interaction of an individual with his or her socio-historical environment

- is multidimensional and consists of information, behaviour, motivation and emotion.
- includes three levels: external (or environmental) conditions, internal conditions and those actual events which bridge external and internal conditions.

So far, we have described the current information-producing individual-environment relationship. If, however, discrepancies should occur, an accomodation process may follow, the term may expressing how something further must also be associated, that is the motivational and emotional dimensions related to the accomodation process. And if this process leads to permanent changes of the internal conditions of the individual, then, and only then, learning has taken place.

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On the basis of these considerations, we can therefore define learning as an interaction of the individual with his socio-historical environmental conditions that leads to enduring changes of the internal conditions of the individual. These changes may involve the declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, motives, values, beliefs, etc (Straka, 1997).

Let us turn to the socio-historical environmental conditions. These include people, objects, and events outside of the individual. In the form of signals, these reach the individual who transfers them into information according to the internal conditions constructed in the course of his development. These signals may have a format we will need to describe in further detail later in this text, by which is meant the dimension of the 'media' to the individual-environment relationship. The signals may be sent by others, by which is meant the 'social' side of the individual-environment relationship. The potential information which is coded by the signals may tell us something about the sender (= self revelation) and may contain a request (= appeal). The latter characterizes tasks at the work-place or in school where these tasks may have the function of 'learning tasks'. If, over and above that, the potential tasks, the tasks of the others and their relationship to the receiver as well as the dimension of the media to the potential information are related to each other in a specific way, then what is meant is the dimension of 'teaching'.

Let us summarize:

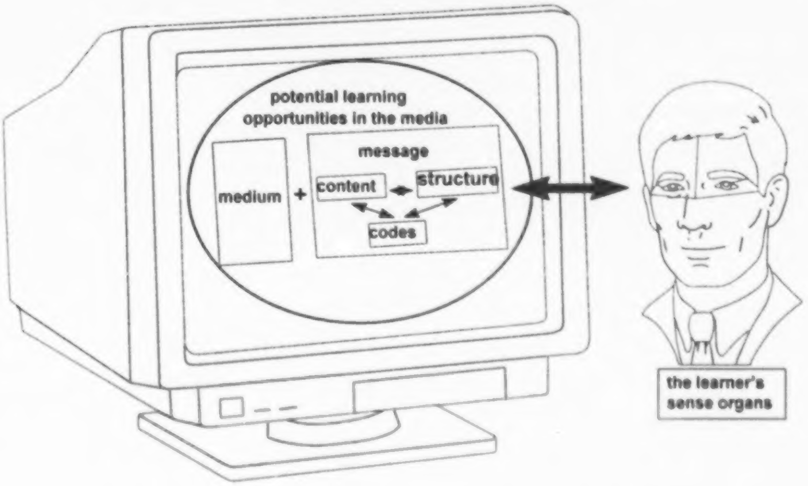
- the individual-environment relationship is established by individual behaviour,
- individual behaviour is composed of interactions,
- behaviour is dependent on the internal conditions of a person at a particular moment,
- behaviour is unique and not repeatable,
- behaviour can not be realized without the relationship to information,
- behaviour, together with the current information produced, is dependent on the internal conditions of a person at a particular moment,
- information is produced individually and is therefore idiosyncratic,
- the individual-environment relationship and therefore also learning is socially inbedded,
- the individual-environment relationship has a 'format'.

3. MEDIA AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MEDIA

What is meant by the formative aspect of the individual-environment relationship is its media dimension of which there are various conceptions. Although there is no lack of definitions or classifications (for a survey see Heidt and Schwittmann, 1976; Issing, 1988; Klimsa, 1993; Weidenmann, 1993a; Adl-Amini, 1994), it is, however, difficult to find a common denominator because of the semantic scope of the term 'medium'. Most definitions of the term emphasize a medium's role as agent in a material, technical sense of carrier or vehicle (Adl-Amini, 1994; Weidenmann, 1995), whilst the partial close linking of medium and content causes problems as much during the production as the reception (for example, with the medium of film). Learners, however, only rarely come into contact with 'pure' media in the material sense of the word, but rather with '(learning) opportunities in the media' as a combination between purposefully coded and structured content and a (material) medium, for which Weidenmann (1993, 1993a, 1995) suggests the following notion:

Diagram 3:

Potential Learning opportunities in the media


potential learning opportunities in the media
medium
+
message
content
structure
codes
the learner's sense organs

- *Media* are objects (e.g., a book), technical pieces of equipment (e.g., blackboard, flip chart) or configurations (e.g., video system, personal computer) with which messages may be stored and communicated.
- *Messages* are purposefully coded and structured contents which are perceived as potential meaningful information and then processed by the recipients, for example, by the learners.
- *Coding* is the labelling, shortening or transforming of information or contents into different symbolic systems. The central symbolic systems of human information processing are the verbal system (optic-verbal and acoustic-verbal), the pictorial and the numerical (number system). The symbolic systems contain further codes and sub-codes. In this way the pictorial system, for example, may be classified according to discrete-pictorial (linked to time, film) or continuous-pictorial (independent of time, pictures).
- The *structuring* of the contents is defined by the instructional strategy and its definition is the subject of learning-teaching-theoretical considerations and will be outlined in the following section.
- *Potential learning opportunities in the media* consist of messages (consisting in purposefully structured and coded contents) which are stored and communicated by means of a medium.
- *Sensory modalities* denote the sense organs eye (visual), ear (auditive), eye and ear (audio-visual) etc. with which the recipients perceive a learning opportunity in the media, that is to say react to it.

	mono-	multi-
Medium	**...media** – book – video system – PC + screen	**...media** – PC + CD-ROM-player – PC + video-recorder
Coding	**...codal** – text only – pictures only – digits only	**...codal** – text with pictures – graphics with inscription
Sensory modality	**...modal** – visual only (text, pictures) – auditive only (speech, music)	**...modal** – audio-visual (sound-track videos)

Medium, coding and sensory modality (see Weidenmann, 1995)

- New media are as a rule *multi-codal*, that is to say they display a number of symbolic systems or rather codings (at the same time), for example, a text, pictures, digits, text with pictures, graphics with inscription.
- New media are as a rule *multi-modal*, that is to say they address a number of the learners' sense organs (at the same time): auditive (speech, music, sounds), visual (text, pictures, animation) and audio-visual sensory modalities (videos with sound-track).

The difference between multi-coding and multi-mediality may be illustrated by the following example: if a person reads a text and in addition hears this text in a spoken form, the coding remains the same in both cases (verbal), but the sensory modality changes (from seeing/visual to hearing/auditive). If a person reads a text and also looks at a diagram, the sensory modality remains constant (seeing), but the coding changes (from verbal to pictorial).

4. NEW MEDIA'S POTENTIAL

The high expectations as regards the learning and teaching with new media are essentially the result of the possibility of combining different codes and sub-codes as well as sensory modalities. The table below shows the abundance of forms of expression which can thereby be constructed and combined.

sensory modality **coding form**		**auditive**	**visual**	
			static	**dynamic**
photographic	true to life	recorded original sounds	picture	film
	schematic / standardized	recorded artificially produced acoustic imitations	diagram, graphics	cartoons, animation
symbolic	verbal	recorded spoken text	written text	moving text
	non-verbal	recorded non-spoken acoustic symbols	non-spoken optical symbols	moving optical symbols

Sensory modality and coding form (Tulodziecki and Straka, 1997)

Through multi-coding and multi-modality, new media are expected to have the following effects on the acquisition of knowledge and on learners' motivation (see Weidenmann, 1995; Issing, 1996):

- With the help of the new media, a mental multi-coding of the subject to be learned may be stimulated by the learner and consequently the acquiring of knowledge improved.
- New media may contribute in a unique way to complex, authentic situations being presented realistically and to the subject being portrayed from a number of perspectives, in a variety of contexts as well as on different levels of abstraction. This can further interest in the subject, flexible thinking as well as usable knowledge.

A further characteristic of the new technologies is the new quality of inter-activity made possible by multi-media. With regard to computer systems, inter-activity describes the capacity of software to open up a row of intervening and directive possibilities to the learner (Haack, 1995). The learner's interaction possibilities are determined by the characteristics of the learning opportunity in the media: whereas the learner is not able to influence the duration of the presentation of for example the slides in a tape-recorded showing, he may view, print and if needs process etc. the pictures in a multi-media learning programme for as long as he wishes. Multi-media learning programmes consequently open up a wealth of activities to the learner, which may widen the learner's repertory of learning strategies and learning experiences.

The 'new' variety of media, codes, modalities and interaction possibilities made possible by the new technologies has led to high expectations as regards optimizing teaching and learning. A series of empirical evidence is available which proves that especially multi-media technology may lay claim to considerable potential to improve learning performance (see Kulik and Kulik, 1991). The majority of the multi-media applications actually in use has, however, only a slight or even non-existent positive effect on learning performance (Clark, 1983, 1994; Hasebrook, 1995, 1995a), one reason for which might well be found in the lack of media-didactic back-up for most commercial multi-media applications due to unsatisfactory professional media developers' qualifications and qualification opportunities both quantitatively as well as qualitatively in past years (see Issing, 1994). In addition to this, there are in all meta-analyses concerns about the methodical quality of the previous research into media applications (see Joliceur and Berger, 1986; Kulik and Kulik, 1991). With respect to all natural expectation concerning the positive effects of multi-media on learning results, we must not ignore the fact that "the history of teaching-learning research (...) (is) to be viewed as the lesson that it is primarily the structure, the implicit didactic strategy of learning opportunities which influences the learning process decisively" (Weidenmann, 1995, 78). Clark (1983, 1994) makes the more rigorous claim that differences in the evaluation of learning opportunities in the media are to be traced back to the respective underlying treatment; one medium may be more economical and suitable than another, but it is in principle a means of transport and therefore irrelevant for the learning process: 'media will never influence learning. Media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in our nutrition' (Clark, 1983, 445).

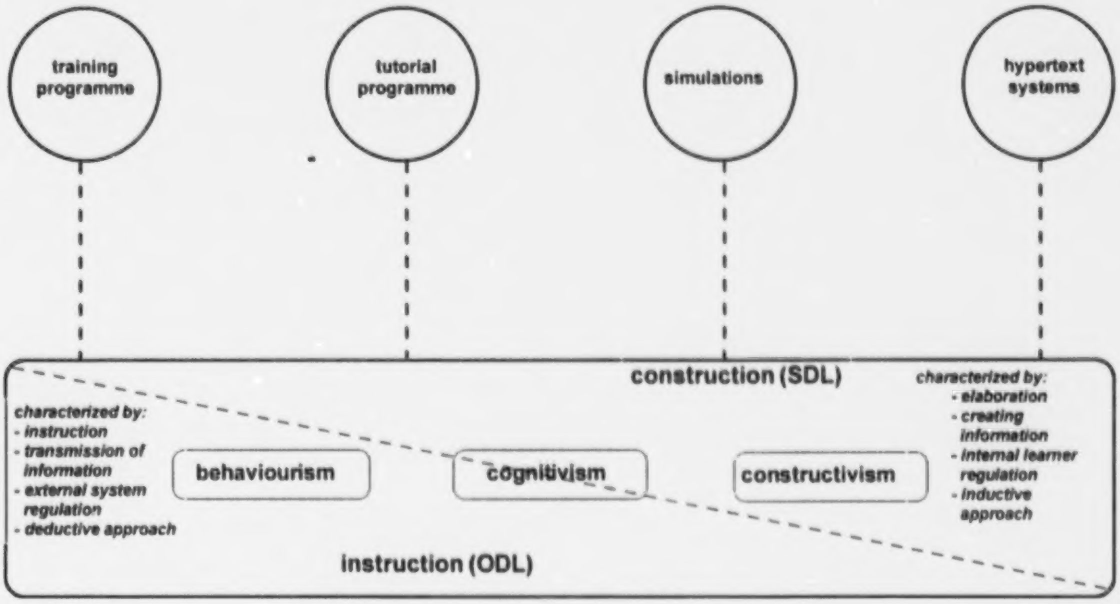
This hypothesis questions the significance of multi-coding and multi-modality for the learning process and assigns utmost priority to the strucure, to deciding on a strategy, that is to say on a method, when designing multi-media learning opportunities and only then does one ask with which media, codings and modalities these may best be mediated.

5. LEARNING-TEACHING-THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Learning-theoretical considerations are central to deciding on a structure when designing a learning opportunity in the media. Learning theories may be differentiated according to which forms of learning are at the fore, such as the acquisition of declarative knowledge (knowing what), procedural knowledge (knowing how) or contextual knowledge (knowing why, where and when). Depending on the learning-theoretical perspective, learning may be viewed as a passive, receptive process with tiny steps and respective feed-back, as a guided or an independent discovery process. If in the learning process the mediation of information is at the fore, then this is usually associated with the *instruction paradigm*. On the other hand, a learning process in which the deciphering of information, the working out on the part of the learner as at the centre is assigned to the *construction paradigm*. The learning-theoretical approaches *behaviourism*, *cognitivism* and *constructivism* may be classified along a continuum with these two learning-teaching-theoretical poles, their boundaries are bluring (see also Issing, 1995, Tulodziecki, in print).

Diagram 4:

Instruction - construction


training programme
tutorial programme
simulations
hypertext systems
construction (SDL)
characterized by:
- elaboration
- creating information
- internal learner regulation
- inductive approach
characterized by:
- instruction
- transmission of information
- external system regulation
- deductive approach
behaviourism
cognitivism
constructivism
instruction (ODL)

When learning within the framework of the instruction paradigm, the mediation of selected teaching contents and a deductive procedure are what are primarily at the fore. The instruction paradigm was especially favoured by behaviouristic approaches, this being especially obvious in programmed learning (Skinner, 1968), but also individual cognitive-theoretical concepts such as the model of significant, receptive learning (Ausubel, 1968) or other-directed learning (ODL) may be assigned to this paradigm (see Straka and Macke, 1979; Straka, 1986).

Where the construction paradigm is concerned, the inductive procedure, the deciphering of information by the learner together with facilitation, support and assistance in learning independently or self-directed learning (SDL) are at the fore. The construction paradigm is based e.g. on Piaget's developmental approach and its transfer to learning and teaching according to Bruner (1966). Nowadays this paradigm is especially favoured by constructivism (Glaserfeld, 1987).

Learning-teaching-theories do not only differ in their view as to how learning is to be understood, according to which regulations it follows or how learning may be supported by environmental conditions, but also in view of the function of learning opportunities in the media. The three central theoretical concepts behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism will be outlined in their essential principles and their understanding of media below:

Approach Aspect	Behaviourism	Cognitivism	Constructivism
image of learner	passive and other directed	active and self-directed	active and idiosyncratic construction of meaning
brain	passive respectacle	information processing piece of equipment	informational closed system
knowledge	reproduced and stored a correct input-output relation	processed result of inner processing process	constructed able to operate with a situation
educational objectives	the right answers	the right methods for finding the answer	being able to manage complex situations
conception	stimulus response	problem solving	construction
teaching strategy	teaching	observing and facilitating	co-operating
teacher	authority	tutor	coach, moderator
(Media characteristics)			
significance of the instruction	great	subordinate	slight
feed-back	quantitative measuring of time and answers	answer analysis	no explicit feed-back
interaction	rigidly prescribed	dynamic, dependent upon learning model	autonomous (structure determined)
directing the learning process	through the medium	through the learner (with the use of adaptable aids)	through the learner
media conception	learning machine	(artificial) intelligence	learning surroundings, electronic encylopedia
'ideal' learning opportunity in the media	exercise programmes (drill and practice)	(intelligent) tutorial systems	hypertext systems, WWW

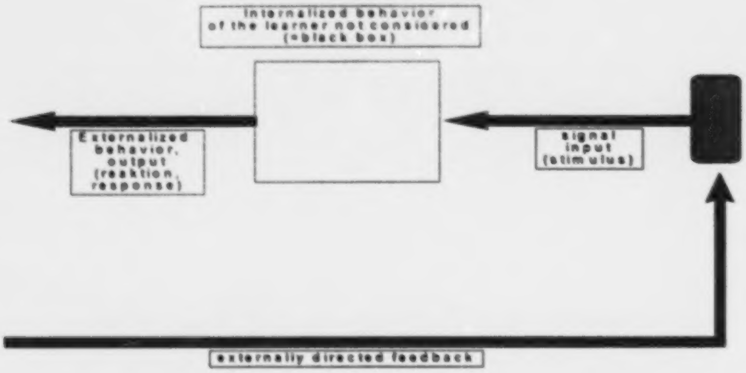
Learning paradigm and media understanding (following Baumgartner and Payr, 1994, 110 and 174)

5.1 Behavioural

According to the behaviouristic conception, learning has taken place when new links between stimuli (S) from the environment and the individual's externalized behaviour (B) are established (= stimulus-reaction learning); in other words, when behaviour brought about by one such stimulus occurs more frequently (= instrumental conditioning). On the basis of this conception of learning, teaching is concentrated on the systematic planning, realization and evaluation of linear, continuous learning paths with regard to specified educational objectives. Human and non-human resources are to be combined in such a way that the effectiveness of the instruction is raised. In addition to this, teaching focuses on the instructional principles like reinforcement contiguity, repetition and on small steps with the aim of shaping behaviour (see Straka, 1977). Some of them may be traced back to Thorndike's *law of effect*, according to which successful behaviour is sooner learnt than that which is not linked to success. As a consequence, contents in learning programmes being divided into tiny, simplified learning steps with specified instructional objectives that every learner would be able to successfully manage. Skinner's principle of operant conditioning, that is the demand for prompt, positive (reward) or negative reinforcement (penalty) led to immediate response as well as to the deriving of countless didactic principles for designing feed-back in learning programmes. However, the approach of Behaviourism does not focus on the internalized behaviour of the learner. It occurs in the 'black box' not further considered.

Diagram 5:

Behaviourism


Internalized behavior
of the learner not considered
(=black box)
Externalized
behavior,
output
(reaktion,
response)
signal
input
(stimulus)
externally directed feedback

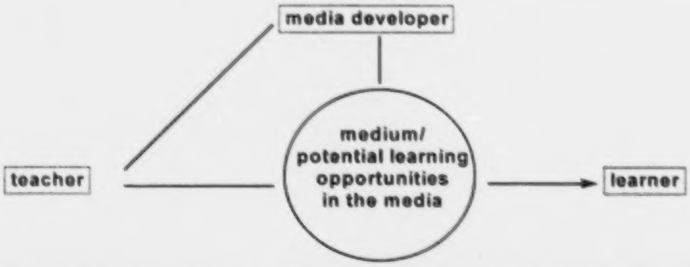
Without a doubt, the most famous learning-teaching-theoretical concept is the programmed instruction, or in other words, Skinner's teaching machine. With the so-called 'technological change of didactic' (see Glaser, 1965; Flechsig, 1976), it was hoped to be able to improve teaching considerably through the application of technical media. The role of the media in the instruction paradigm may be summarized as follows:

- "Instruction media are effective instruments for optimizing teaching,
- in order to be able to develop their efficiency, instruction media must be carefully planned and evaluated,
- instruction media may successfully take on teaching functions,
- instruction media are able to evaluate as 'objective' teaching instruments (testability) and may with constant quality be applied as often as desired (multipliability), (Weidenmann, 1993, 6).

Designing learning opportunities in the media is the task of the teacher and the media developers, and if and to what extent they take into account the learners' knowledge, abilities and skills when developing programmes all depends on amongst other things their learning-teaching-theoretical qualifications.

Diagram 6:

Media in behaviourism


media developer
teacher
medium/
potential learning
opportunities
in the media
learner

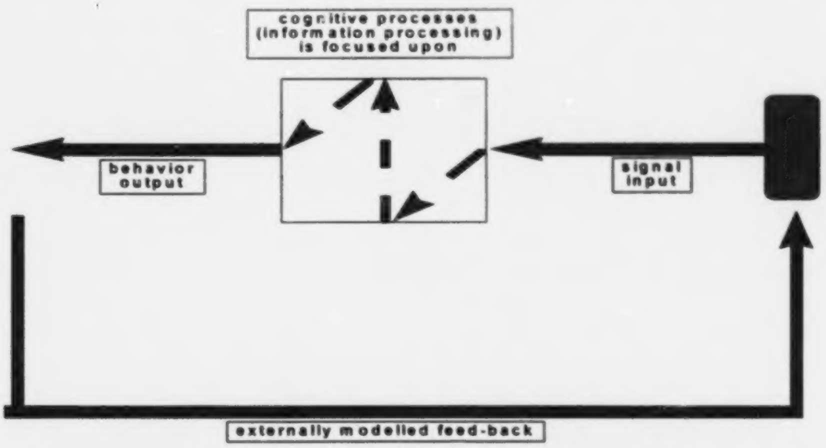
Behaviouristic conceptions of learning previously had a strong influence on the development of teaching programmes. Behaviouristic learning theories are nowadays represented above all in the form of exercise programmes (for example, vocabulary or typewriting trainers).

5.2 Cognitive

What is characteristic of cognitive approaches is viewing the learner as an active and self-directive being. The non-observable, internalized behaviour, i.e. cognitive processes that happen in the course of learning and which were explicitly ignored in behaviourism now move into central position. Cognitive learning theories view learning mainly as a process of information processing, this bearing an affinity to artificial intelligence research (see Lesgold, 1988).

Diagram 7:

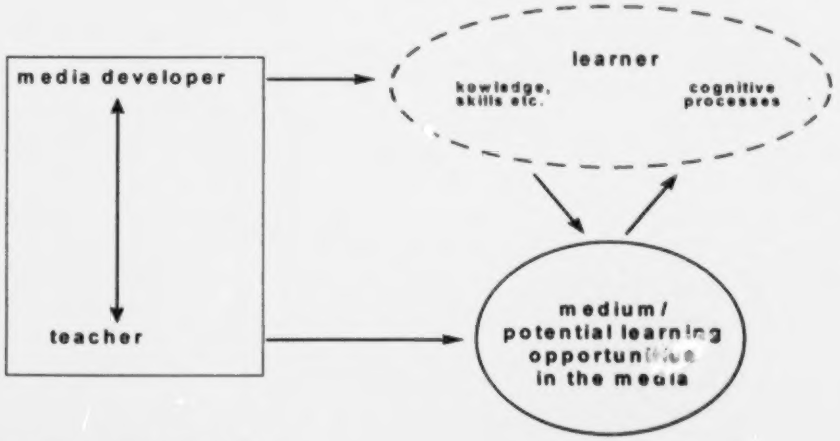
Cognitive approaches


cognitive processes
(information processing)
is focused upon
behavior output
signal input
externally modelled feed-back

The function of the media in cognitive approaches may be characterized as follows: although the cognitive processes of the learner, his or her knowledge, abilities and skills, etc. are taken into consideration during the development of media, the medium loses its significance in cognitive approaches. Media are viewed merely as bearers for structured contents with which certain cognitive processes are meant to be produced in the learner. The decisive factor for learning effectiveness is primarily the instructional strategy with which the contents are organized and for which media, as vehicles, are suitable only to very different degrees. The choice of media may be made dependent on the criteria effectiveness and economy. Effectiveness may be interpreted as much in a material sense (effort/benefit-relationship, costs) as in a psychological sense of the word (mental effort on the part of the learners), (Weidenmann, 1993, Tulodziecki, in print).

Diagram 8:

Media in cognitive approaches


media developer
teacher
learner
kowledge, skills etc.
cognitive processes
medium / potential learning opportunities in the media

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The influence of cognitive learning theories on the organisation of external conditions, that is to say the taking into account individual experience structures, as well as on designing learning opportunities in the media may be characterized as follows:

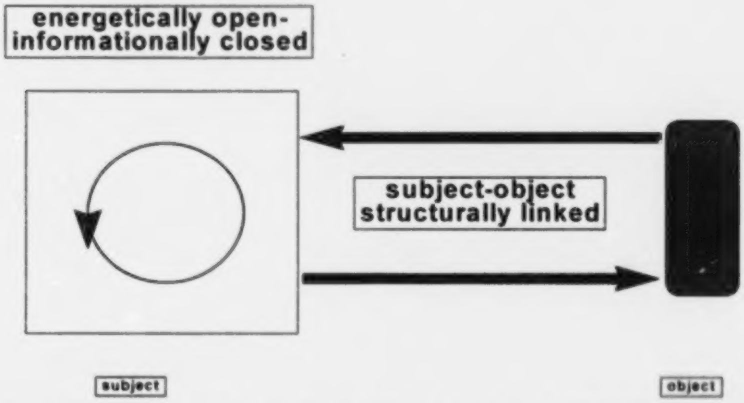
- directing the learner so as to allow him to work with the learning programme according to his own needs and demands,
- presenting information realistically so as to establish for the learner the link between the teaching content and his own experiences, as well as
- offering varying degrees of difficulty and graded learning aids so as to allow the learner to deepen the teaching content as he requires.

5.3 Constructivistic

Likewise in constructivistic approaches, learning is viewed as an active process in which, however, learners construct their knowledge individually in relation to their subjective experience structures in real (learning) situations. Learning is therefore an idiosyncratic interpretation of the world and the result of the learner's construction achievements. The learner's active, constructive role places therefore at the centre of attention not the 'infallible' teacher (behaviourism) nor the supportive tutor instructing how to learn independently (cognitivism) but rather one's own active experience. Unlike behaviourism and cognitivism, no objective informational input and output exist for constructivism. The learner may find himself in an energetic exchange relationship with his socio-historical environment, but the information that he processes in the course of his analysis of himself and the world is, however, produced by himself and integrated into his own knowledge structure (see Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992; Baumgartner and Payr, 1994). In constructivism, the learner, as a discerning subject, does not reproduce reality, rather he actively constructs it in a process of understanding, the relationship between subject and object being therefore structurally linked (see Glaserfeld, 1987).

Diagram 9:

Constructive approaches



Whereas behaviourism and cognitivism both hold the view that something 'objective' exists outside the individual learner and therefore of being able to cause and empirically control learning processes with the means of systematically planned instruction, constructivism permits this approach at the most for basic qualifications in well-structured fields of knowledge (Weidenmann, 1993).

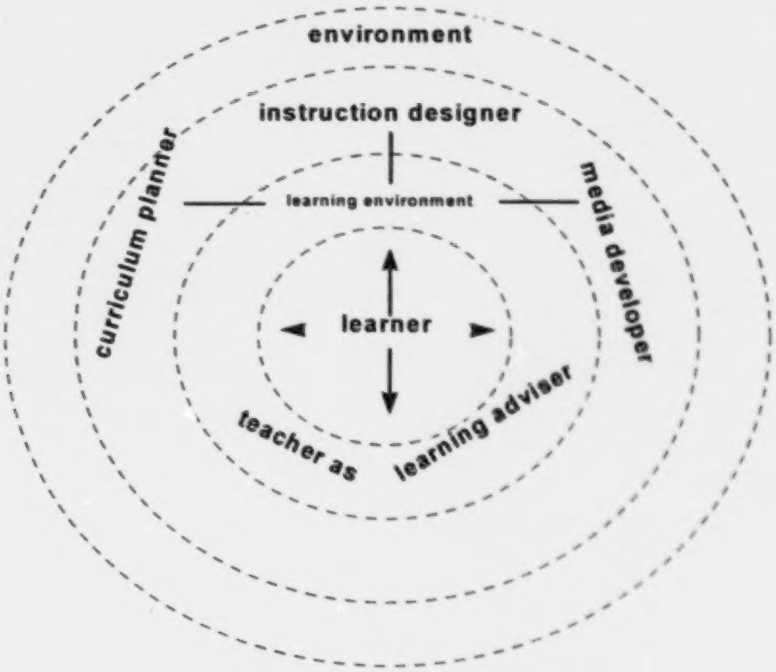
The function of the media in constructivism also differs from that in behaviouristic and cognitive approach. Since knowledge, according to a constructivistic understanding, may not be mediated but rather itself constructed in concrete situations out of personal experience, learning opportunities in the media are then assessed as to if and how they stimulate the learner's independent activity, serve to construct knowledge in the processing of complex situations and problems and support the acquisition of appropriate strategies in the sense of cognitive tools (see Kommers, Jonassen and Mayes, 1992; Dubs, 1993). Learning opportunities in the media are therefore to be assessed according to whether they

- present authentic, complex situations realistically,
- present learning contents from multiple perspectives and in multiple contexts, as well as
- activate the co-operation between learners (see Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992; Spiro et al., 1992).

The application of media, or in other words the learning opportunities in the media do not, as in behaviourism and cognitivism, start out from the teacher, rather it is the involved learner who forms the focal point. It is he who uses media with the character of learning environments or open learning opportunities as cognitive tools for the construction of knowledge. The teacher, as a learning advisor, can give learning aids in order to support the learner in the learning process.

Diagram 10:

Media in constructivistic approaches



On the basis of constructivistic principles, media have the character of potential learning opportunites to support problem-solving processes whereby the instructional elements, although not ignored, do however remain marginal. These learning environments are meant to enable the learner to achieve complex teaching goals in ill-structured domains (Spiro et al., 1992). In this sense, the new media such as hypertext/hypermedia systems are especially compatible with a constructivistic understanding of learning. Hypertext/hypermedia systems or WWW are to be understood in the constructivistic sense as open learning opportunities, as cognitive tools. Navigating in a hypertext basis or surfing in the Internet corresponds to the active construction of knowledge within the framework of individual problem-solving processes.

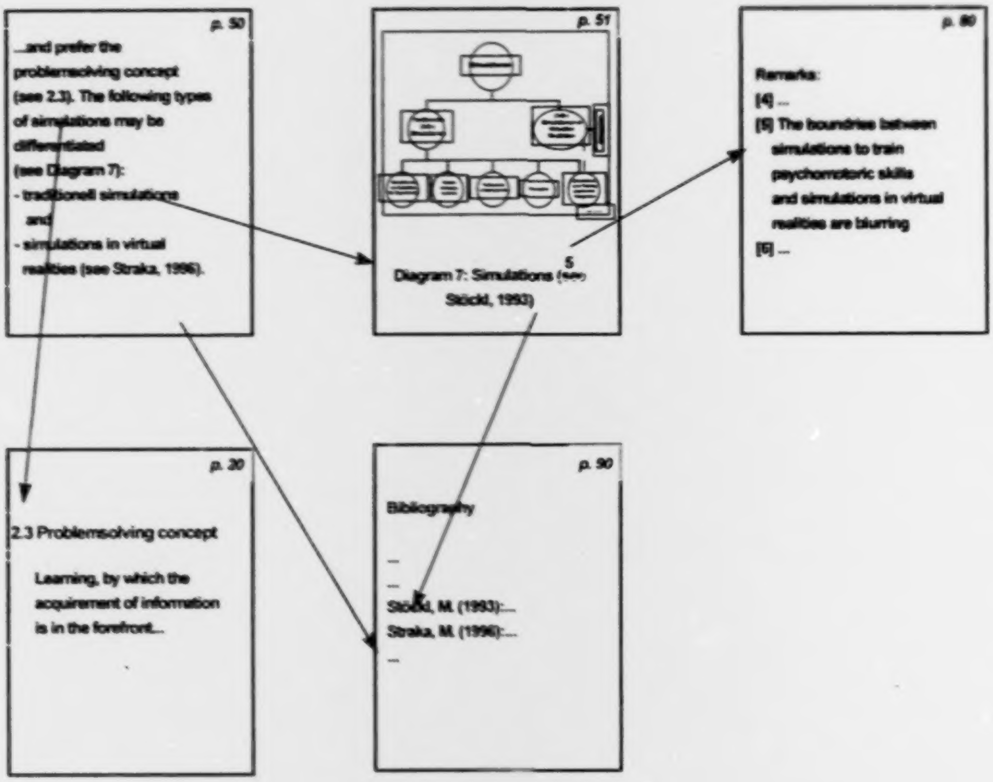
6. HYPERTEXT/HYPERMEDIA

The basic idea behind hypertext is the categorization of a subject in individual units of information (knots) which are organized in the form of links in a network system whereby flexible access to any units of information required in whatever order at all is made possible.

This non-linearity in the representation of knowledge is the essential characteristic of hypertext systems. Of course, a whole row of non-linear structures may also be realized in conventional texts, especially in scientific texts, through references, comments, foot-notes, etc., - for example, through the reference to external sources of information such as a bibliography or table of contents. The texts remain, as regards their organization and presentation, linear forms of presenting knowledge and are used to a large extent in linear or sequential form for the aquiring of knowledge (see Kuhlen, 1991).

Diagram 11:

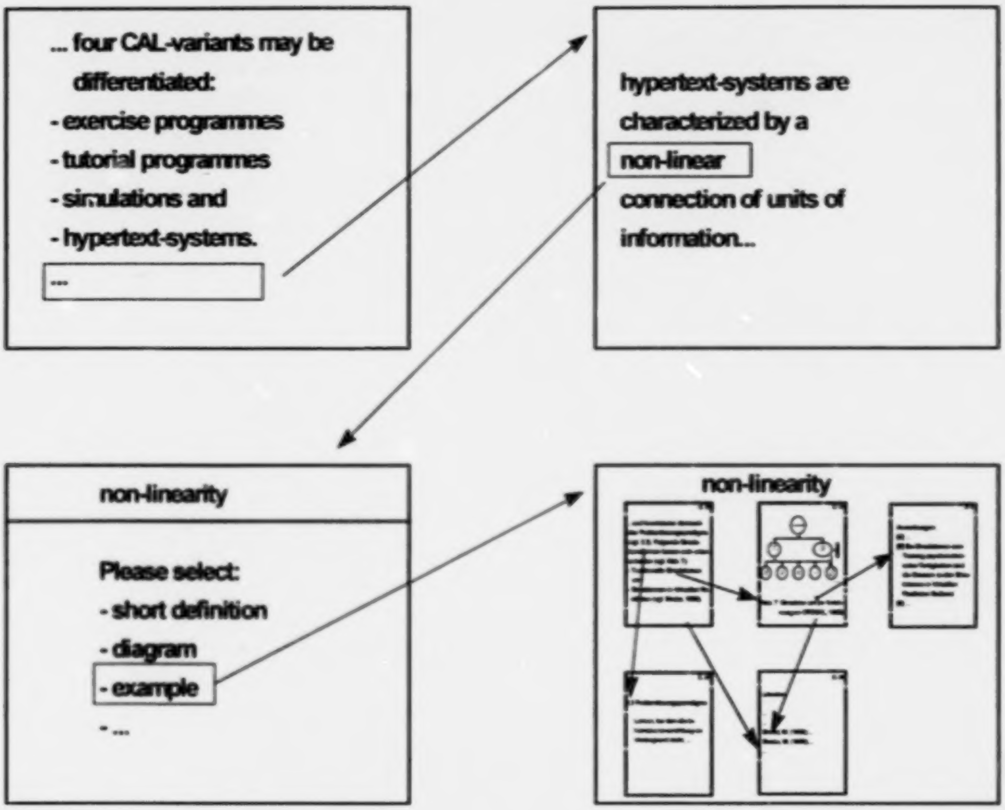
Non-linear structures


p. 50
...and prefer the problemsolving concept (see 2.3). The following types of simulations may be differentiated (see Diagram 7):
- traditionell simulations and
- simulations in virtual realities (see Straka, 1996).
p. 51
Diagram 7: Simulations (see Stöckl, 1993)
5
p. 80
Remarks:
[4] ...
[5] The boundries between simulations to train psychomotoric skills and simulations in virtual realities are blurring
[6] ...
p. 20
2.3 Problemsolving concept
Learning, by which the acquirement of information is in the forefront...
p. 90
Bibliography
Stöckl, M. (1993):...
Straka, M. (1996):...

The television was not invented for the Open University nor was the educational application of primary importance as far as hypertexts were concerned. Rather hypertext systems are about information opportunities in the form of electronic encyclopaedia. In an educational context, hypertexts are meant to allow the learner discovery-learning. Learning with hypertext systems is associative, explorative, problem-solving learning, learning through testing hypotheses. Hypertext systems 'no longer mediate knowledge in rigid blocks. Tasks such as 'read the next fifty sides by tomorrow!' no longer have any sense. The orientiering towards teaching goals may be organized so much more consequentially. Homework exercises might then read: 'find out the current ozone levels in and around town by tomorrow and explain why the levels are at the highest in the centre!' (Hasebrook, 1995a, 296).

Diagram 12:

Hypertext structure


... four CAL-variants may be differentiated:
- exercise programmes
- tutorial programmes
- simulations and
- hypertext-systems.
...
hypertext-systems are characterized by a
non-linear
connection of units of information...
non-linearity
Please select:
- short definition
- diagram
- example
- ...
non-linearity

Through the application of multi-media, the possibility arose of not only being able to represent information in hypertext systems in the form of texts, tables and diagrams but also to include videos, sound, animation, etc. Such a system of non-linear linked units of information that not only include optical-verbal or static-pictorial forms of coding but also for example acoustic and dynamic-pictorial codings are called hyper-media (composed of hypertext and multi-media).

Hypertext/hypermedia systems offer on the one hand the possibility of furthering the learners' constructivity, spontaneity, independent activity and self responsibility, but hold on the other hand the danger of overtaxing the learners. Empirical evidence on the use of hypertext/hypermedia systems showed that two basic types of learning problems especially may be identified: disorientation and cognitive overload (Tergan, 1995).

The problem of disorientation, also known as 'lost in hyperspace', refers to the navigation in hypertext/hypermedia systems, that is to say to the cognitive orientation within the structure available in the hypertext basis. The problem of a lack in overview of one's position and of not knowing the possibilities of access to certain information may, however, be met by making available orientation and navigational aids (Issing and Schaumburg, in print; Jonassen and Mandl, 1990; Tergan, 1995).

Cognitive overload may arise when a series of information has to be retained all at once. When using hypertext systems, it is necessary for example to remember 'which information knots have already been called up, along which route one arrived there, what their contents were, what information is still to be called up, what navigational possibilities are available, what functions are fulfilled by the individual means of navigation, etc.' (Tergan, 1995, 134). The danger of cognitive overload is especially great when the learners are confronted with a number

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of different coding systems (as in hypermedia systems) and several technical pieces of equipment which then causes them to divide their limited attention ('split-attention-effect'; Weidenmann, 1993). The required extra memory capacity, attention and ability for metacognitive control in this case is commonly not available to learners; they may then be kept from processing the information in greater detail (Tergan, 1995; Friedrich and Mandl, in print).

The increasing importance of learning environments designed according to constructivistic principles such as hypertext/hypermedia systems leads to new demands on the management of knowledge as well as on self-direction in learning in the context of information and communication technologies. The readiness and ability for self-direction therefore become core skills when learning with new media (see 8). Beside this shift within the learning forms from other to self-directed learning, the new technologies have in addition influence on the social components as well as on the learning venue. These effects may be clarified using the example of the WWW.

7. WORLD WIDE WEB

Learning in the network is in! Following teleshopping and telework, we now have telelearning. If we were to take the number of publications as our indicator, we would see that education in the network is currently receiving above average attention in both research and practise. This is especially true in the context of universities and schools. Even the European Union has reacted: in most member states as well as on a European level initiatives are already underway for the application of new media (European Commission, 1997), just as in the United States of America and Japan:

- the German Federal Ministry for Education and Science, Research and Technology has, together with the German Telekom, begun a three-year initiative 'schools to the network' with the aim of connecting 10,000 schools to the on-line information services;
- the Danish government plans, within the framework of its action plan 'INFO 2000 IT&T Action Plan', to connect all primary and secondary schools to national and interbational networks by the year 2000;
- Finland began in 1995 the five-year plan 'Education, Training and Research in the Information Society: a National Strategy' in order to connect all schools and other educational institutions to the information networks by the year 2000;
- the French government declared in the year 1995, 244 projects, of which some are to be found in the field of education, to be of 'public interest'. Besides compling a directory of the digital resources and supporting multi-media suppliers and on-line services through the Education Ministry, selected schools shall be connected to eachother through the research network RENATER;
- Italy began in 1995 an action plan through which 20% of the primary and 30% of the secondary schools shall be equipped with multi-media hard and software;
- Great Britain launched in 1995 the initiative 'Superhighways in Education - The Way Forward' in order to connect its schools to the information networks. In this context, 23 mio. ECU have been made available for 23 pilot projects;
- In Sweden, the natioal school network 'Skoldatenätet' on the basis of the Internet has already been in existence since 1994. Moreover, every district must take measures to prepare their schools for the application of new technologies. A bill is also to make the application of new educational technologies in teacher training compulsory;
- the European Community supports the research into new media, their manufacturing and distribution as well as teacher training and further training in this field through several programmes such as Telematic Applications (1994-98), Media II and Info 2000 (1996-99) and Leonardo da Vinci (1995-99);

- through the initiative 'The Technology Literacy Challenge' of the USA, all American schools shall be connected to the data highways by the year 2000. The National Information Infrastructure (NII) initiative of the American government goes one step further - 'it is committed to working with business, labor, academia, public interest groups, Congress, and state and local government to ensure the development of a national information infrastructure that enables all Americans to access informationand communicate with each other using voice, data, image or video at any time, anywhere' (NII-Agenda-for-Action, 1997);
- the Japanese Education Ministry began in 1990 a nine-year action plan in order to equip all the schools with multi-media hard and software, to familiarize the pupils with multi-media technology and to train the teachers appropriately. The Ministry for International Trade and Industry began in 1994 a 'Programme for a Communication Infrastructure' in which focus is placed especially on developing multi-media applications in education.

What chances and risks does learning in information networks hold other than pessimism and euphoria? This question will be examined below.

Learning in the WWW is in principle about the individual, having as a result durable changes of the individual's internal conditions as an impact of (purposefully) navigating in a hypertext/hypermedia basis of gigantic proportions. Whilst critics of Internet interpret this huge offer of information as a threat to the individual as well as to mankind, others see instead in the wealth of information the challenge to select and process information (Issing, 1996). The WWW becomes therefore the learning medium for one's personal management of knowledge and the ideal tool for self-directed learning. Although theoretically and empirically proven evidence on learning in the network is at present lacking (Owston, 1997), it may be presupposed that those problems which arise when learning in the WWW are comparable to the difficulties arising through learning with hypertext/hypermedia systems - disorientation and cognitive overload (see paragraph 6). What is of special interest when learning in the network, however, are the learning chances and risks. They are a result of the special form of '*on-line* learning' as compared to learning with *off-line* media such as hypertext/hypermedia systems on CD-ROM - above all with regards to the change of learning venues and learning formats, or in other words, social forms. Against this background, especially the following peculiarities of learning in the network can be mentioned:

- On-line learning is expensive! At least in Germany, the Telekom's scale of charges stands in the way of being able to use information networks intensively (Lange, 1996). Added to this are the costs for hardware which increase especially when (para-)social interaction with the means of video conferences are to be made available.
- The hardware technical infrastructure for on-line learning is at present insufficient. The narrow range of data cables leads to a strain on the network occuring especially in the afternoon and early evening when millions of users, above all in the USA, are active all at the same time. These strains on the data transmission prove to be problematic for learning. The access to multi-media information such as sound, picture and film archives is usually only to be recommended in the night (Issing, 1996). This problem ought well to be solved only after the introduction of ISDN throughout the whole world.
- On-line learning offers the possibility of (para-)social interaction. An essential extension to learning with off-line media such as hypertext/hypermedia systems on a CD-ROM basis is the possibility to co-operate and communicate. Learners are able to send or receive messages to other learners, tutors or experts or run a video conference with each other or with teachers or experts, to which purpose the Internet offers services such as e-mail, Talk, News or Internet Relay Chat (IRC). What has been learned in the field of correspondence degree courses is that co-operation and communication are indispensable for maintaining learning activity and the learning success; the dropping-out figures at the Distant Learning University Hagen may to a large degree be traced back to this very factor (Issing, 1996).

New educationally usable potential is brought about through learning in networks in opposition to the for the most part isolated learning with (off-line) learning programmes or hypertext/hypermedia systems without the possibility to co-operate or communicate with other learners or teachers. Whereas however in traditional seminars real, unmediated, personal, face-to-face contacts arise, not even glances may be exchanged in virtual universities, and even - despite the enormous costs - video systems are set up, the camera shot is carried out at exactly that moment when the speaker is silent again (Beste and Kälke, 1996) - para-verbal (intonation, speech pauses) and non-verbal information (gestures, facial expressions) are thereby to a large degree lost. We must therefore ask ourselves whether such para-social, virtual contacts via e-mail or video conference are indeed suitable for ensuring the social integration of the individual-environment relationship, that is to say of the learning. The answer to which is left to the evaluation of current experiments.

- On-line learning is flexible! A new kind of flexibility is undoubtably one of the undeniable advantages and chances of on-line learning. With the keyboard and a mouse it is possible to click into any educational opportunity at all from whomever, individually and comfortably, flexible in time and space, whereby the radius of potential information is widened and the speed with which these opportunities may be accessed increased. Through the WWW one has access, for example, to the learning opportunities at Britain's Open University (http://keats.open.ac.uk/hx), to the Virtual High School in British Columbia (http://www.wondertree.org/vh/indexs.html) or the Accredited PhD-Programme of the School of Transformative Learning of the California Institute for Integral Studies (http://www.caso.com/iu/providers/ciss.html). Moreover, the learning opportunities in the WWW are being expanded continually. This flexibility leads to learning opportunities being dereasingly attented and instead increasingly called up. Traditional educational institutions might therefore tend to lose significance.

The examples show that the WWW adds to the already existing information further educational opportunities. On the one hand, unforeseeable possibilities are being opened up to the users. On the other hand, this may well also involve a change in demands so that users must have at their disposal skills with which the respective system may be handled, or in other words, navigated. The demands in the field of knowledge management will increase further with the implementation and development of the WWW, included under which are those activities that involve the contact with information and knowledge such as the selecting, processing, spreading, and assessment of information as well as the developing, linking, distribution and application of knowledge (Reinmann-Rothmeier and Mandl, 1997).

Through this bridging of social and geographic barriers, virtual groups and communities may be formed that take part in exchanges, handle questions and problems together and thereby open up new learning possibilities. People of different cultures are able to communicate and co-operate through electronic means, and for global players the possibility is opened up of solving problems through company networks (intranets) with the expertise of colleagues operating world-wide. In this way, new forms of co-operative action are brought about which lead to new world-wide forms of works communities in the form of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, in print). Learning in the process of working may therefore receive a new quality.

Empirical evidence shows that even before the WWW, learning in the process of working is at least as significant for employees as tutored learning in 'traditional' institutionalized environments such as seminars (see Straka et al., 1992). In the context of the WWW, however, one has to take into account how computer networks open up in principle only the possibility of exchanging computer data.

What the individual user does with this data is left entirely up to him. What must also be borne in mind is that not every processing of information by a user leads to learning (Straka, 1997). Transferred to the world of work, this means:

Action at the place of work primarily serves the manufacturing of products and the offering of a service to others. Of course, learning without action is not possible, but not every action leads to learning, to an offer of service in itself or to self-directed learning (Straka, in print). This offering a service in itself will be explained below.

In vocational training and further training, self-directed learning has been given a high status especially in recent years, the reasons for which being the increasingly wide application of information and communication technologies in the world of work together with the new organization concepts such as 'Lean Production', 'Kaizen' and 'Learning Organization'. Further indicators for this phenomenon are the yearly conferences 'Colloques Europeen sur l'Autoformation' in France (since 1994), 'The International Self-Directed Learning Symposia' in the USA (annually since 1986), 'The First Asia-Pacific Seminar on Self-Directed Learning 1995' in Seoul and 'The First World Conference on Self-Directed Learning 1997' in Montreal.

8. NEW KEY QUALIFICATIONS

The considerations on learning with hypertext/hypermedia systems, or in other words on learning in the network, have shown that the readiness and ability for self-learning in general and self-directed learning in specific are prerequisites, methods and goals for learning with new media (Weinert, 1982). The idea of self-directed learning has a long tradition in Europe (Straka, 1997a). Research and development in different scientific disciplines such as in adult education and educational theory have led especially in recent years to this form of qualification being able to be described and explained more distinctly. With reference to Knowles, one of the prominent advocates for self-directed learning, and by referring to interest and motivation theoretical approaches as well as to research evidences in the fields of learning strategies, meta-cognition and attribution, self-directed learning may be described as follows: self-directed learning takes place when the relationship between learner and subject may be characterized by *interest*, when the learner determines the learning need according to his interest, applies *strategies* in order to aquire the content, *controls* the application of these strategies and subjects his achieved learning result to an *evaluation* (Straka et al., 1996).

Based on interest-theoretical (Deci, 1975; Prenzel, 1986; Nenniger, 1986, 1993) and performance-thematic considerations and results (Heckhausen and Rheinberg, 1980), 'interest' is differentiated in contentual and procedural interest. Both are formulated on the basis of a value-expectancy model in which the value and expectancy components are included as independent dimensions (Atkinson, 1964).

As regards *contentual interest*, the value component refers to the individual significance attributed to the contentual aspect of the anticipated learning goal and the expectancy component to the assessment of the contentual ascertainability of the anticipated learning goal.

Procedural interest is taken in analogy to content interest and refers in its value component to the personal significance attributed to the behavioural aspect geared to realising the learning goal striven towards. The expectancy component refers to the individual assessment of the realisability of this behaviour. Both the value and the expectation components can be related to the constructs of resource management, sequencing and acquisition.

The following fictitious example of a trainee in the career of industrial manager serves to illustrate the theoretical considerations as to contentual and procedural interests. A trainee wishes to familiarize herself with a word-processing programme because she deems it to be important personally (value component of content interest: high). Based on her previous experience in the learning context at school, she assumes that she can gain a grasp of the contents of the word-processing programme (expectation component of content interest: high). Moreover, the trainee thinks it is important to plan her learning, and she assumes she can manage this planning process very well on her own (value and expectation components of procedural interest as regards sequencing: high).

The 'strategies' associated with the acquisition of new declarative and procedural knowledge are differentiated in rehearsal, structuring and elaboration (cf. e.g. Danserau, 1978; Pintrich et al., 1991; Weinstein and Mayer, 1986).

- *Rehearsal* comprises procedures such as repeating the work steps or learning by heart with the aim of an exact remembering of information.
- Structuring comprises procedures by which goal and task-relevant information is reduced and related in a way suited to learning or working.
- By *elaboration*, procedures of learning and working are generally designatd with the aim of establishing a relationship between new information and personally existing knowledge and experience. Elaborations may involve the ascertaining of differences or common traits of information, the critical examination of information (Brookfield, 1989), the new formulation of information in one's own words and the visualisation of information.

'Control' comprises cognitive control, meta-cognitive control and motivational control:

- *Cognitive control* has to do with whether certain procedures are included in the learning episode and, if so, that the necessary implementation processes are used to achieve this in a purposive and unimpeded, that is to say concentrated way.
- *Meta-cognitive control* has first of all to do with surveillance activity during learning and working, and secondly with regulation procedures in which trainees adapt flexibly to the requirements of a task (c.f. e.g. Brown, 1978, 1984).
- *Motivational control* has to do with individual motivation to achieve the goal one has set for oneself. This motivational aspect is also expressed in a value expectation model. On the value-component side stands the individual significance which a person attributes to the goal he or she has set, that is the value of a possible success or failure. The expectancy component thus includes the specific goal orientation of motivational control. This goal orientation is either directed towards achieving the goal (appetitive) or avoiding it (aversive) (McClelland, 1955; Berlyne, 1966; Nenniger, 1993).

To apply this to the above example: a trainee has decided to acquire a command of the word-processing programme largely on her own; she first plans her further steps. She keeps a half hour a day free (sequencing (time planning): high) and works in a concentrated manner through several fundamental paragraphs of the handbook at the staff's disposal (cognitive control: high). She sets herself the goal of at least learning the software (expectation component of motivational control: appetitive). She thus writes down the main commands and shortcuts and makes a mental note of them (acquisition: high). When difficulties arise, she wonders whether she ought to ask another trainee for help, but then decides against it (resource management: low).

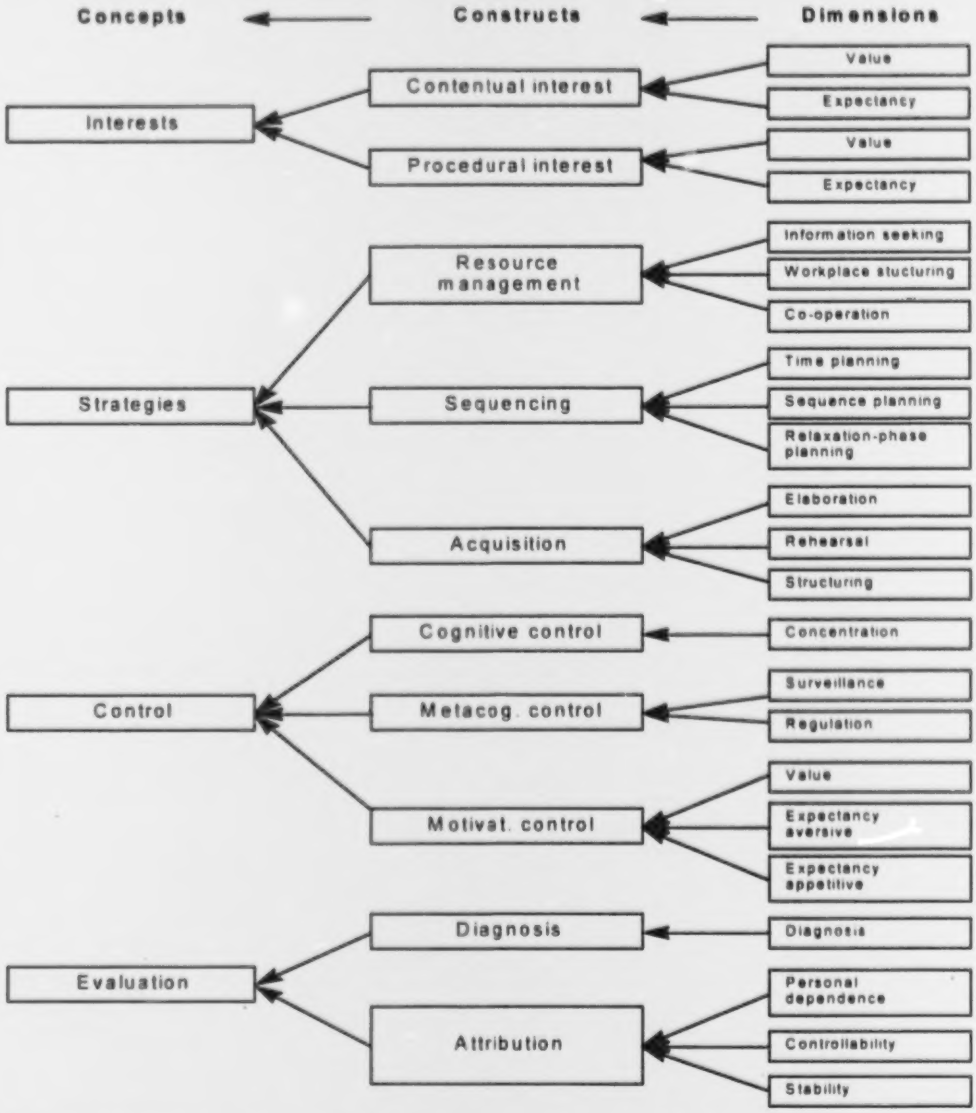
The summative 'evaluation' of the learning result is differentiated in 'diagnosis' and 'attribution'.

- *Diagnosis* refers to the final individual and therefore subjective assessment of the learning result as the difference between the anticipated goal and the achieved learning result.
- With *attribution* the reasons for the diagnosed learning result are ascertained. In conformity with attribution theory (see Weiner, 1986), three dimensions are distinguished: the dimension of controllability involves the question whether action and learning happened compulsorily or not. The dimension personal dependence involves the assessment of whether or not a learning result has been achieved by personal initiative. The dimension stability involves the question as to whether or not the constellation of conditions under which a learning result was achieved remained constant.

Applying this to the example: when the trainee reflects on her learning progress after some weeks, she arrives at the subjective assessment that she is meanwhile able to master some of the fundamentals of the word-processing programme and she views the learning process as having been satisfactory (diagnosis: medium). This she attributes above all to the fact that she has directed this process largely herself (attribution, dimension of personal dependence: high). The concepts, constructs and components characterizing self-directed learning are summarized below:

Diagram13:

Concept, constructs and dimensions of Motivated self-directed learning


Concepts
Constructs
Dimensions
Interests
Contentual interest
Value
Expectancy
Procedural interest
Value
Expectancy
Strategies
Resource management
Information seeking
Workplace stucturing
Co-operation
Sequencing
Time planning
Sequence planning
Relaxation-phase planning
Acquisition
Elaboration
Rehearsal
Structuring
Control
Cognitive control
Concentration
Metacog. control
Surveillance
Regulation
Motivat. control
Value
Expectancy aversive
Expectancy appetitive
Evaluation
Diagnosis
Diagnosis
Attribution
Personal dependence
Controllability
Stability

With self-directed learning, above all those activities which come before and after learning are given a higher status. Especially in the WWW, the resources with which the new knowledge is to be learned are found and assessed. In this respect, the readiness and ability for self-directed learning are for a personally profitable experience of multi-media and the WWW an - if not the most - important prerequisite or internal condition.

Here the question is raised whether these conditions are present and what are the consequences for vocational training and further training. In this context there are - as Simons (1997) postulates and for which Knowles was criticised (Feuer and Geber, 1988) - several concerns to bear in mind. There are romantic views about self-directed learning that it autimatically takes place when people get a chance to do it and that learning is joyful. According to which, offering the appropriate resources - for example, multi-media and the WWW - is sufficient so that people learn their whole life long and self-directedly. The readiness and ability for self-directed learning, however, can not always be assumed to be present, rather this personality trait is to be viewed as the goal of education, that is to say of the organization development and towards whose realisation a numbers of paths may be followed.

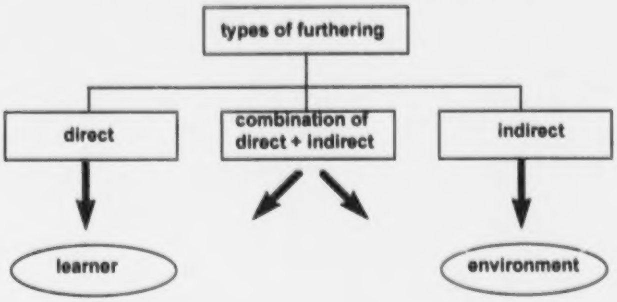
9. FURTHERING OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

9.1 Furthering the ability to self-learning

A series of approaches are available for the furthering the ability to self-learn. In principle, self-directed learning may be furthered directly, indirectly or in a combined form of direct and indirect approaches (Friedrich and Ballstaedt, 1995; Friedrich and Mandl, in print).

Diagram14:

Furthering of self-directed learning



9.1.1 Direct approach

Direct furthering of the ability to self-learn basically concerns a learning-strategy training. The necessary cognitive and motivational strategies for self-directed learning are directly conveyed to the learner so that he or she finally has at his command an appropriate repertoire of strategies in order to be able to learn self-directedly successfully. With direct furthering approaches, the learner is directly influenced upon; self-directed learning is above all a goal but not the means of direct furthering.

9.1.2 Indirect approach

Indirect approaches of furthering self-directed learning follow a different path: by appropriately organizing the external learning conditions - the learning environment - the learners are allowed an amount of scope, degrees of freedom as well as options so that self-directed learning is made possible, or in other words furthered, that is to say that something is learned self-directedly almost 'automatically'. Self-directed learning, therefore, is the means and the goal of indirect approaches of furthering self-directed learning. The constructivistic approach of anchored instrution is one much-discussed possibility of this very approach of furthering self-directed learning and one in which especially the new media have a decisive role to play (Bransford et al., 1991).

9.1.3 The approach 'anchored instruction'

According to this approach, instruction is situated in engaging, problem-rich environments that allow sustained exploration by students and teachers. In this arrangement they come to understand why, when and how to use various concepts and strategies. To realize this, a 'macro-context' creates anchors for experts, teachers and students from diverse backgrounds, to communicate in ways that build collective understanding (Bransford et al., 1991).

9.1.3.1 Goals

The goals for learning that underlie the development of video-based macro-contexts emphasize the importance of helping students to become independent thinkers and to avoid the acquisition of 'inert knowledge', that is knowledge that is not used spontaneously even though it is relevant in a certain situation. An important consideration is that students must learn to identify and define issues and problems on their own rather than simply respond to problems that others have posed.

9.1.3.2 *Learning*

To realize the goals, students have to be engaged in generative rather than passive learning activities. It is not sufficient to memorize how a scientist presents and explains a phenomenon. Instead, students need to engage in argumentation and reflection, to use and refine their existing knowledge and attempt to make sense of alternative views. In order to learn concepts and principles effectively and to avoid the acquisition of 'inert knowledge', they must be used generatively, that is to say they have to link, interpret and explain new information in a problem-solving mode rather than in a factual knwledge mode.

9.1.3.3 *Instruction*

Characteristics of instruction are:

- anchoring or situating instruction in meaningful problem-solving contexts in order to encourage generative learning.
- creating shared environments that make contact with students' intuitive knowledge, permit sustained exploration by students and teachers, and enable them to understand the kinds of problems and opportunities that experts in various areas encounter and the knowledge that these experts use as tools.
- co-operative learning and co-operative problem-solving settings to enhance opportunities for generative learning.

9.1.3.4 *Learning materials*

Different types of instructional materials that initiate different kinds of learning activities like complex, open-ended problem-solving, communication, reasoning and establishing connections to other subjects and to the world outside the classroom.

The assumptions about goals, about learning, seven design features are realized in some of the materials (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992):

a) Video-based formats to motivate, ease to search, support complex comprehension and to help poor readers;

b) Narrative with realistic problems instead of a lecture on video to make remembering easier, realize major engagement, to prime students to notice the relevance of contents like mathematics and reasoning to everyday events;

c) Generative formats, that is to say the stories end and students must generate the problem to be solved to permit reasoned decision making, to motivate to find relevant data, to teach students to find and define problems to be solved and to provide enhanced opportunities for reasoning;

d) Embedded data designs, or rather all the data needed to solve the problem are in the video. This permits reasoned decision making, motivates to find relevant data, puts students on 'even keel' with respect to relevant knowledge and clarifies how the data depends on specific goals;

e) Problem complexity, that is that each adventure involves a problem of at least fourteen steps, to overcome the tendency to try for a few minutes and then give up, introduces levels of complexity characteristic of real problems, helps students to deal with complexity and develops confidence in abilities;

f) Pairs of related adventures that provide extra practice on core schema, help clarify what can be transferred and what can not illustrate analogical thinking;

g) Links across the curriculum helping to extend domain specific thinking to other areas, encouraging the integration of knowledge, supporting information findings and publishing (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992, 69).

9.1.4 Combining direct and indirect approaches

The combination of direct and indirect furthering self-directed learning consists, on the one hand, in making available learning environments which make possible and encourage self-directed learning, and on the other hand, in reducing the mediation of contents in favour of methodical competences, that is to say explicitly making learning strategies the subject of learning.

There are many reasons for favouring a combination of direct and indirect approaches of furthering the ability to self-learn. One principal problem of the direct approach consists in the fact "that people with well-developed cognitive abilities of training measures often profit more highly than those with lesser developed abilities, that is to say with a lower level of development (...). Cognitive strategy training can lead for example to learn-hindering, negative training effects if a person first of all has to unlearn a strategy before he may construct a new one" (Friedrich and Mandl, in print, 17). Moreover it has been proved that those strategies learned through direct approaches often go to waste if they can not be applied, practised and inforced in appropriate learning environments. A further point of criticism concerning the direct approaches refers to the transfer problem: learners often have difficulties in applying those learned strategies in another context.

In connection with indirect approaches of furthering self-directed learning, the fact that the degrees made available by the appropriate learning environments may not be adequately used by a series of learners has proved to be a problem and which may, therefore, often lead to the learners being overtaxed which was the case for example in the case of hypertext/hypermedia systems.

Because of the disadvantages of direct as well as of indirect approaches, those concepts which combine the elements of direct and indirect furthering of the ability to self-learn gain significance especially in the context of vocational training and further training. The currently world-wide discussed approach of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown and Newmann, 1989) will be presented in greater detail below.

9.1.4.1 The cognitive apprenticeship approach

The cognitive apprenticeship approach (Collins, Brown and Newmann, 1989) assumes that even today, many complex and important skills such as those required for language use and social interaction are learned informally by observation, coaching and successive approximation. By practicing this, the learning of skills and knowledge is embedded in their social and functional context and students become integrated in the culture of experts.

Reviewing and analysing recently developed teaching methods, a framework with four dimensions was developed that constitute any learning environment: content, method, sequence and sociology.

9.1.4.1.1 Content

The content consists of: domain knowledge, heuristic, control and learning strategies:

- *domain knowledge* includes the conceptual and factual knowledge and procedures explicitly identified with a particular subject matter. This knowledge is best acquired through application in a variety of problem situations.
- *heuristic strategies* are in general effective techniques and applied for accomplishing tasks; most of them are, however, tacitly acquired by experts in the process of solving problems.
- *control strategies* supervise the process of carrying out a task, the selection from possible problem-solving strategies, the decision when to change strategies, etc.
- *learning strategies* range from general strategies for exploring a new domain to more narrow strategies for extending or reconfiguring knowledge in processes of solving problems or carrying out complex tasks.

9.1.4.1.2 Methods

Teaching methods should facilitate students acquire and integrate cognitive and metacognitive strategies for using, managing and discovering knowledge. Their acquisition and use depends on interactions between the individual's current knowledge and beliefs as well as the social and physical environment in which the problem-solving takes place. Strategies involved in complex cognitive activities may be captured and made explicit. These strategies and skills, used by experts, however, have a tendency to remain tacit. Teaching methods should be designed so as to give the students the opportunity to observe, engage in and invent or discover expert strategies in their context.

Six teaching methods are differentiated: modelling, coaching and scaffolding as the core of cognitive apprenticeship. These are designed to help students acquire an integrated set of cognitive and metacognitive skills through processes of observation and of guided and supported practice. Articulation and reflection are methods designed to help students both focus their observations of expert problem-solving and gain conscious access to and control of their own problem-solving strategies. Exploration is aimed at encouraging learner autonomy in defining and formulating the problems to be solved.

- *Modelling* involves an expert working on a task so that students may observe and build a conceptual model of processes that are required to accomplish this task. This requires the externalization of usually inner cognitive processes by the experts using basic conceptual and procedural knowledge.
- *Coaching* includes observing students while they carry out a task and offering hints, scaffolding, feed-back, modelling and reminders. The enactment and integration of skills in relation to a well-understood goal is accompanied by interactive and well situated feed-back and suggestions.
- *Scaffolding* refers to the support by teachers helping the student carry out a task. These supports may either take the form of suggestions and help, as in Palincsar and Brown's (1984) 'reciprocal teaching', or they can take other forms of support, such as the cue cards in Scardamalia et al.'s (1984) procedural facilitation of writing.
- *Fading* consists of the gradual removal of supports until students are learning and working on their own.
- *Articulation* consists of any interventions for getting students to articulate their knowledge, reasoning or problem-solving processes in a domain, that is questioning to lead students to articulate and refine their knowledge, articulating their thoughts as they carry out their problem-solving and assuming the role of critic or monitor in co-operative activities.
- *Reflection* involves students comparing their own problem-solving processes with those of an expert or another student. Reflection is enhanced by the use of various techniques for reprodcing the performances of both expert and novice for comparison. Various recording technologies such as video or audio recorders and computers may be used to reproduce student and expert activities.
- *Exploration* involves pushing students into a mode of problem-solving on their own. Exploration is the natural culmination of the fading of supports.

9.1.4.1.3 Sequencing

Sequencing consists of principles that guide the flowing of learning activities such as increasing complexity and diversity and global before local skills.

- *Increasing complexity* refers to the construction of a sequence of tasks and task environments where successively the skills and concepts necessary for expert performance are required.

- *Increasing diversity* relates to the construction of a sequence of tasks which an increasingly wider variety of strategies or skills requires. Tasks requiring a diversity of skills and strategies are introduced so that the students learn to distinguish the conditions under which they apply.
- *Global before local skills.* This sequencing of activities provides learners with the opportunity to build a conceptual model of how all the elements fit together before attempting to produce the actual piece. The main effect of this sequencing principle is to enable students to build a conceptual map before attending to the details of the domain.

9.1.4.1.4 Sociology

Sociology of the learning environment indicates that apprentices learn skills in the context of their application to realistic problems, within a culture focused on and defined by expert practice. The students successively see the skills they are learning being used in a way that clearly conveys how they are integrated into patterns of expertise. And by advancing in learning skills, apprentices are increasing their participation in the community.

This sociology is characterized by five characteristics: situated learning, culture of expert practice, intrinsic motivation, exploiting co-operation and exploiting competition.

- *Situated learning* serves several different purposes: (a) understanding the purposes or uses of the knowledge the students are learning; (b) learning by actively using knowledge rather than passively receiving it; (c) learning the different conditions under which the knowledge may be applied; (d) learning in multiple contexts to induce the abstraction of knowledge, that is to acquire knowledge from a dual form, both being tied to the contexts of its uses and independent of any particular context.
- *Culture of expert practice* refers to the creation of a learning environment in which the participants actively communicate about and engage in the skills involved in expertise. Integrating students into a culture of expert practice in cognitive domains involves teaching them how to think like experts.
- *Intrinsic motivation.* Intrinsic motivation for learning is promoted by methods of modelling, coaching and fading. Of equal importance, however, is that students attempt to carry out realistic tasks for the purposes that characterize adult expertise practice.
- *Co-operation and competition.* Co-operation refers to having students work together in a way that fosters co-operative problem-solving. Competition refers to the stategy of giving students the same task to carry out and then comparing what each produces. It sould however be realized that co-operation may have positive and negativeeffects.

Those approaches which combine direct and indirect approaches of furthering self-directed learning have now also been developed in the field of new media (see Hofer and Niegemann, 1990; Liebermann and Linn, 1991; Burger and Desoi, 1992; Straka and Stöckl, 1993, 1994), and basically concern a learning opportunity in the media orientated along a constructivistic paradigm (for example, hypertext/hypermedia systems or simulations), supplemented by adaptive, instructional elements which refer not only to the content but also to learning strategies.

9.2 Experience, readiness and ability for self-learning

Learning in general and therefore also self-directed learning is, on the one hand, an individual and idiosyncratic process. On the other hand, this process is embedded in life and work by the socio-historical environmental conditions as we clearly saw in the sociology of the learning environment in cognitive apprenticeship. In the work-place, this concerns those jobs that with the most different forms of organization are all related to each other and which may be carried out differently by the employees.

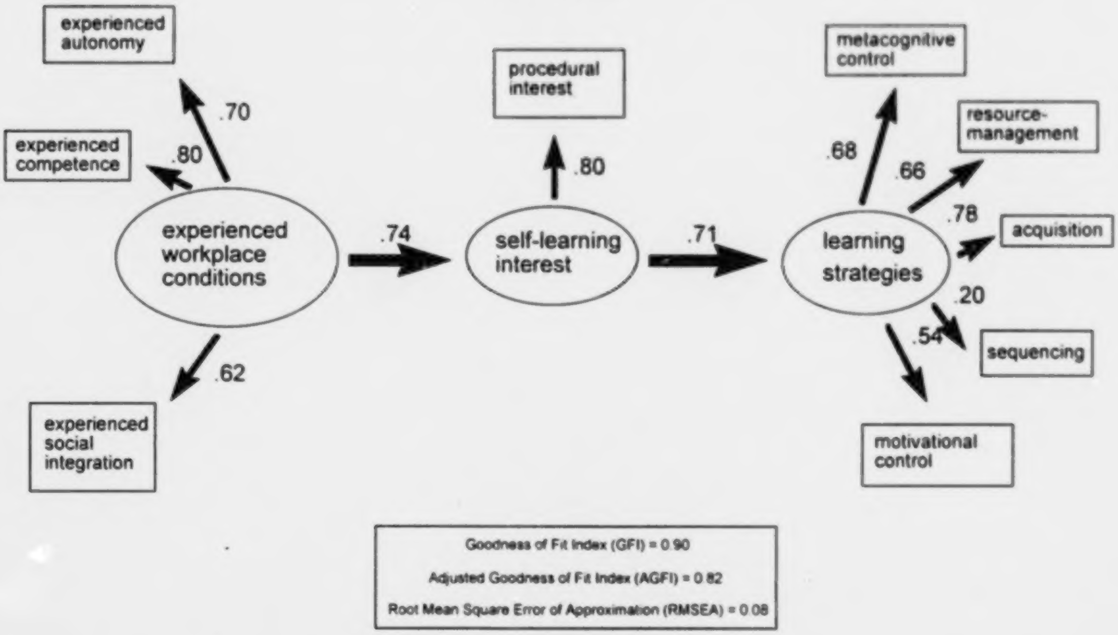
Following the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Deci and Flaste, 1995), the hypthosis is held that the readiness to self-directed learning is related to the individual experiencing of autonomy, competence and social integration. These three constructs may be put into concrete terms for the world of work as follows:

- *experiencing autonomy* at the place of work is when a person has the impression he has scope, that is to say that he is able to carry out his work tasks according to his own schedules.
- *experiencing competence* at the place of work is when a person has the impression he carries out his work tasks competently as well as successfully and when he feels himself to be effective.
- *experienced social integration* is when a person feels his tasks are acknowledged by superiors and colleagues and when he feels integrated in the works community.

Several investigations of the Research Group LOS verified relations between these three experienced work-place conditions and interest in learning (Kleinmann and Straka, 1996) and the self-assessment of learning strategies as well (Straka and Schaefer, 1997). The results of a structured modelling are to be found in fig. 15.

Diagram15:

Structural relationship between experienced worplace conditions, interest and learning strategies


experienced autonomy
experienced competence
.70
.80
experienced workplace conditions
.62
experienced social integration
.74
procedural interest
.80
self-learning interest
.71
metacognitive control
resource-management
.68
.66
.78
acquisition
learning strategies
.20
.54
sequencing
motivational control
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.90
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.82
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08

The experiencing of social integration in the context of information and communication technologies - this being our hypothesis - will be a critical requirement for the future. However, questions remain:

Will social integration also be experienced at the computer work-place, that is to say the learning venue via WWW when a para-social interaction takes place world-wide with other people? Or will Naisbit's hypothesis 'the more high-tech, the more high touch' (Naisbitt, 1982, 35) become more relevant than ever before?

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10.CONCLUSIONS

a) *The potential of new media*: with the use of new media, the individual mental multi-coding of the subject to be learned can be stimulated and consequently the retrieving of knowledge improved. New media may contribute in a unique way to complex authentic situations being presented realistically and to the subject being portrayed from a number of different perspectives, in a variety of contexts as well as on different levels of abstraction. This can further interest in the subject, flexible thinking as well as usable knowledge.

b) *The importance of the medium for the learning success*: the learning result is influenced primarily by the instructional strategy structuring the message. One medium as the vehicle delivering the message may be more economical or suitable for particular contents than another. However, no explicit relation between medium and learning result is empirically verifiable.

c) *Learning formats*: the educational use of 'old' and 'new' media goes hand-in-hand with a continuous transition from instructional to constructivistic learning-teaching concepts as well as from other to self-direction in learning. According to constructivistic conceptions, knowledge is not transmitted but individually constructed in the learner's problem-solving process, that is to say knowledge is constructed in idiosyncratic learning processes.

d) *Social forms of learning*: through the new information and communication technologies (for example, the WWW, Intranets, 'communities of practice'), the form, extent and radius of potential social contacts widen. It remains to be seen, however, whether face-to-face interactions really can be replaced by 'parasocial interactions' through the new media.

e) *Learning venues*: through the new information and communication technologies, an educational opportunity is decreasingly tied to a particular learning venue or to certain times. Educational opportunities will in the future be less and less attended but rather increasingly called up. Traditional educational institutions will most probably lose relative importance.

f) *Core skills*: the application of new media and the learning under constructivistic 'teaching conditions' imply a readiness and ability for self-directed learning. The readiness and ability for self-directed learning are therefore becoming the survival kit in the information society.

g) *Readiness for self-directed learning*: the readiness for self-directed learning is furthered by the experiencing of autonomy, competence and social integration.

h) *Ability for self-directed learning*: we may differentiate between direct and indirect approaches in furthering the ability to self-learn. A combination of indirect furthering (for example, making available appropriate learning environments) and direct furthering (for example, strategy training) appears to be the most successful approach.

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VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING: THE QUESTIONS OF VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND LEGITIMACY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Non-formal learning (CEDEFOP 1997) takes place within the workplace, in leisure activities and in the home. Efforts to increase the visibility of learning taking place outside formal training and education thus should give credit to the role of this "hidden" or "tacit" (Polanyi 1962) learning.

An assessment of non-formal learning is of central importance for individuals in order to ease their entrance into training as well as to improve their labour market eligibility; for enterprises in order to increase their potential for human resource management; and for societies as a whole in simplifying the transfer of skills between different spheres (education, work, home) and to improve the allocation of resources.

Identification and validation of non-formal learning thus can be viewed as a way of "accounting" for existing or potential competence-resources. If appropriate methodologies were developed and accepted, it would be easier for individuals as well as enterprises and the state to "keep stock of" their resources, thus providing a better basis for their use and allocation.

The importance of this becomes clear when applying an economic perspective to the issue. The importance of intangible values (knowledge, skills etc.) has been increasing, relative to the importance of tangible values. As long as no reliable methodologies for the identification and validation of the knowledge potential exist, the factual role of intangibles seems to be underestimated (OECD 1996) - in budgets as well as in the management of existing resources.

This contribution is to focus on some of the principal challenges relating to the identification, validation and recognition of non-formal learning. The major challenge lies in the combination of a micro-focus - i.e. the methodologies to identify and assess learning on an individual level - and a macro-focus which denotes the political, economic and cultural prerequisites to attribute social credit to non-formal learning.

2. CONCEPTUAL BARRIERS

A multitude of concepts is used to describe the processes in question. Spanning from validation to assessment, accreditation, creditation, accounting and measuring, the choice of words does not always come as a conscious reflection on their linguistic and contextual meaning.[1] Colardyn (1994) has attempted to introduce a conceptual framework distinguishing traditional recognition-processes within formal training and education from the recognition of non-formal learning outside formal training and education). In spite of some weaknesses, this definition may be helpful in moving towards a more consistent use of language within this field.

Colardyn suggests a basic distinction between *certification* and *validation*. Traditional *certification* (leading to diplomas, professional certificates etc.) is typically and traditionally provided by public authorities, educational institutions, professional bodies, or through collective bargaining. Thus it is a concept identified with the recognition of formal education. It does not normally take into account the full range of an individual's personal and professional competencies.

Unlike formal certification, *validation* refers to the process of recognising a wider range of skills and competencies which people develop throughout their lives in different contexts, through education as well as through work and leisure activities. In order to make these implicit and partly invisible competencies and skills more explicit and visible for individuals as well as enterprises, the acquired skills have to be identified and assessed.

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[1] This complexity is of course dramatically increased when taking into consideration the different languages being used. The French *"validation"* has a strong meaning, referring to "a stamp" or "approval" from the state, linking validation to the formal rather than the non-formal domain. The French *évaluation*, the English *assessment* and the German *Bewertung* are more appropriate, not so strongly linking to the formal certification-systems. The final "results" of these processes can be described through concepts like the English *recognition*, the German *Anerkennung* and the French *reconnaissance*.

Irrespective of whether *validation* or *assessment* is used, a question remains as to the use of the term *non-formal* or informal. The English term *"informal"* is used to describe something "irregular; without ceremony or formality". Informal learning, understood as "learning by doing", "learning by using", "tacit learning", must of course be reflected by the new methodologies and systems. But in addition, the approaches to learning introduced to work organisations (regarding job instruction, structured team-work, quality management etc.) and elsewhere, must be focused upon. This last category is far from being irregular and casual, but still does not receive the same formal recognition as learning within educational institutions. In this way, the term *"non-formal"* includes both the casual and the non-casual (planned) forms of learning.

The validation process thus confers a value to assessed abilities (Liétard 1991). And the acquired abilities have to be trusted in a professional as well as in a social context (legitimacy). "Validation" thus involves an assessment of the equivalence of recognised skills and competencies in relation to a defined standard of achievement. Colardyn (1994) points to the fact that the process of validation and assessment is often focused on those abilities which are transferable from one context (work, leisure, training etc.) to another.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Diversified approaches

The multitude of methodologies in the assessment of non-formal learning can partly be interpreted as a reflection of the growing number of countries involved, of the diversity of approaches, and as a reflection of the complexity of the processes involved.

The *French* "bilan de compétence" (CEDEFOP 1997, Perker/Ward 1994, 1996) distinguishes between a *preliminary* phase, intended to lead the candidate to define and analyse his or her needs; an *investigative* phase which should help the candidate to state his or her values, interests and aspirations, general and occupational knowledge, skills and aptitudes and identify motivation; and a *concluding* phase in the form of personal interviews where the aim is to review the results with the candidate.

The *British* "Accreditation of Prior learning" (APL) differs from the "bilan" as it leads to the award of a formal recognition such as a diploma/certificate, or in the form of a partial recognition (relative to the NVQ or SVQ-system). The procedure (CEDEFOP 1994) starts with general information about the APL process. In a succeeding session the candidate - assisted by a mentor - has to reflect on his or her experience, relevant skills and knowledge. Finally, the candidate's portfolio is assessed by an assessor who may interview the candidate and may ask questions to test the candidate's understanding of the work.

The central element of the *Dutch* assessment approach (Bom/Klarus/Nieskens 1997), currently under testing in different sectors, is a predefined task, carried out in an actual or simulated situation. The central elements of the competence in question have to be represented in the task, thus allowing the candidate to show if he or she actually commands the necessary skills in a realistic context. Upon completion of the task, the candidate must reflect on how the task was performed and how other tasks within the same domain could have been solved by the same or related methodologies and approaches.

These examples show that a combination of *interviews, diagnostic assessments, self-assessments* and *tests* are used in assessing knowledge. Most commonly, the approaches may lead to a portfolio or as a certificate. The French, British and Dutch examples are oriented towards guided processes, using dialogue as an inherent approach in the assessment process. The same can be said of several other approaches such as the Irish, Australian and Canadian examples (CEDEFOP 1997).

To balance the dialogue and to use self-assessment (and self-understanding) as a way to improve the quality of the assessment-process, seems to be basic. They also seem to recognise the individual and context-specific character of the learning being assessed.

These dialogue and guidance based approaches are contrasted by electronically based expert systems proposed, among else, for reasons of *costs, capacity* and *neutrality or objectivity*.

This work has been conducted on a sectoral as well as on a national (e.g. Ireland, France and the UK) and European level. Currently, most support towards the development of electronically based expert systems comes from the European Union. One of the central objectives of a

"European Skill Accreditation System" (1996) is to give everybody the possibility of having their skills assessed and documented in a Personal Skills Card (PSC). Electronic tools and expert systems made universally accessible through the internet are of crucial importance to this initiative.

However, this requires the identification of a number of "knowledge areas" to assess on a European level. Although it is acknowledged that there is no fixed list of knowledge and skills areas which could be tested at a European level, the subject ought to be well established and should not be subject to any major doctrinal controversies.

The following types of knowledge are distinguished: *Core knowledge areas*, like mathematics, sciences, informatics, geography, foreign languages; *vocational and technical skills* like marketing, business management techniques, accounting; and *key skills* related to logistics, organisational techniques, communication, decision making abilities, risk management abilities, negotiating and interpersonal skills.

As the system eventually gains recognition, the skills card would complement paper qualifications and become real passports to employment. The idea of a PSC is currently being followed up through a series of transnational projects (European Commission 1997).

3.2 Conceptions of knowledge and learning

The methodologies used in the British APL system, according to O'Grady (1991), can be evaluated by their *validity/reliability* and *acceptability/credibility*. The concepts of acceptability and credibility are closely related to the (social) value and status attributed to the assessment results. The somewhat broader concept of *legitimacy* will be used here in order to approach these aspects. As to the concepts of validity and reliability, these will serve as starting points for a discussion whether methodologies are able to assess and validate what they are supposed to do.

Validity, refers to the degree to which test scores predict some practical criterion for example those defined by the British NVQ standards (O´Grady 1991). It is a measure of the degree to which the assessor's decision in respect of an individual's evidence accurately reflects that individual's level of competence.

Reliability, also according to O´Grady, is a measure of the degree to which a candidate presenting his or her portfolio of evidence will get the same results irrespective of when, where or by whom he or she is assessed. Both, validity and reliability thus reflect the quality of the assessment process.

Research on traditional examinations (Kvale 1972, 1977, 1980, 1993; Fredriksen 1984) gives us important clues as to the basic problem of increasing validity and reliability of validation and assessment. Both within psychology and sociology, statistically based research on the validity and reliability of formal validation and examination processes has been conducted as *psychometric tests*.

It may be argued that the problems of validity and reliability in traditional, formal examinations, will be even more serious in the field of assessment and validation of non-formal learning. Here, learning paths are more individual, and where the knowledge in principle is situated (Lave/Wenger 1991) and context-bound. The question of how to improve validity and reliability cannot be answered without asking what kind of knowledge concept are we basing our discussion of validity and reliability on?

Three different kinds of knowledge are identified as (Kvale 1993):

- The *dogmatic form* of knowledge, for example the one given by God or some other divine authority, will not be part of this discussion.
- The *objectivistic form* of knowledge consists of objective facts (true or false; cf. Habermas 1981a) with logical rules for combining them. In this "paradigm", the questions of validity and reliability can be viewed as a pure technical and/or instrumental question, in finding the best

methodology for deciding on what is true and what is false knowledge. Assessment could be, for example, based on multiple choice tests, thus improving validity as well as reliability.

- *Normative or socially created and defined knowledge* (Habermas; op.cit.) is situated and context-bound, and should be evaluated through the question of whether it is *accepted* or not. The normative perspective which is also to label as hermeneutic, requires a more open approach. The focus must be changed from the (objective and delimited) learning product to the learning process. Since a certain level of judging is necessary, this may be interpreted as a subjectivistic. Finally, it is of course also a situated approach in the sense that learning is context-bound, and has to be assessed as such. Some of the approaches presented above (the French and the British cases) may be interpreted as related to the more hermeneutic understanding; using dialogue as an important tool.

The distinction between objectivistic knowledge on the one hand, and normative/social (or subjectivistic) knowledge on the other, is basic in order to understand the methodological problems associated with the assessment of non-formal learning. These two conceptions - positivistic and hermeneutic approaches - are implicit in the actually developing methodologies. The implications of choosing one or another of the conceptions may be profound.

The *positivistic conception* of knowledge is clearly present in the European Commission's approach towards electronically based expert-systems. The idea of a Personal Skills Card is strongly linked to the identification of areas of "non-disputable", objective knowledge, thus allowing non-biased assessment.

In spite of this, the *normative or situated conception* seems to be the dominant one, underpinning the approaches of several countries. Thus, the third element in the Dutch experiment, where the candidate has to "reflect" on the task, is an interesting example of this. In this perspective, knowledge is not "given", but is something which can be adjusted to a vast area of new situations. Its *transferability* and adjustability representing the core of the learning process and knowledge product.

The objectives "behind" the new assessment methodologies are to increase the visibility of the learning which takes place outside formal education and training, and to account for the important hidden or tacit learning taking place at home, at work etc. In this way, efforts to increase validity and reliability make little sense if not combined with a proper *understanding* of the learning processes in question, and the different forms of knowledge addressed.

This does not mean that assessment methodologies should choose between the different conceptions of learning, rather, they have to consider their own limits as to the assessment of different forms of learning processes and learning results. A consequence of this might be that combinations of methodologies be developed, as we have already seen in some countries. In this way, systems would be ready to assess objectivistic as well as socially situated learning.

3.3 In search of criteria for assessing learning

The conceptual division elaborated above will serve as a basis for discussion on how to improve the quality of the assessments, the choice of criteria as well as their use.

3.3.1 Political requirements

The new approaches to assess non-formal learning are based on a changing political focus, emphasising the importance of learning in a competitive and changing world. In the European Commission's White Paper on Teaching and Learning (1996, p. 13), this focus is clearly expressed:

"In today's world, knowledge in the broad sense can be defined as an acquired body of fundamental and technical knowledge, allied to social skills. It is the balance of this knowledge acquired through the formal education system, in the family, on the job and through various

information networks, which make in the broad and transferable body of knowledge which is most favourable to employment."

Based on this, the assessment of learning (of which the Personal Skills Card is one of the important elements) should consider three different knowledge areas: Firstly, *basic knowledge* (languages, writing and reading, mathematics etc.). as the domain if the formal education and training system; secondly, *technical knowleage* relating to occupations, and 'thirdly, *interpersonal skills*, regarding the ability to co-operate and work as a part of team, creativity and the quest for quality. This points to the fact that full mastery of this last kind of skills can only be acquired in the working environment and therefore mainly on the job. The employability of a person and his or her ability to adapt and change, is, accordingly, connected to his or her ability to combine basic, technical and social skills. This perspective is not, however, apparent in existing systems.

The message of the White Paper, and of a number of national policy-documents of recent years[2], is that the countries in question, need *a broader knowledge base*, balancing the three elements mentioned above: basic, technical and social skills.

The guided and dialogue-oriented approaches developed in countries like France, the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands seem, at least to some extent, to reflect the complexity and contextuality of a new and broader perception of learning and knowledge. In contrast to this, the approach outlined regarding the European Skills Accreditation System (op.cit.) is, in a peculiar way, in opposition to these broader concepts. By underlining the importance of leaving as little room as possible for individual, national and cultural subjectivity this follow-up to the White Paper suggests an approach which avoids the broader concept of learning and knowledge.

In spite of the concern for cost, capacity and neutrality underpinning the development of standardised methodologies, the explicit focus on the broad knowledge base illustrated above must be taken into consideration. Effort should be directed into a systematic elaboration of assessment criteria, which are able to deal with the situated and unique character of learning. To some extent we speak about the need to increase the transparency of the processes: which criteria are used, when and how they are used.

3.3.2 Criteria for dealing with non-formal learning

O'Grady has addressed the question of how to improve the methodologies of assessment by asking how to improve validity and reliability. Using Caudill (1990) and her methodology for making decisions on the basis of "imprecise information" ("fuzzy decision-making"), O'Grady's points out that decisions are normally made on the basis of judgements and relative to the evidence given by the individual and the context in question. In order to arrive at a reasonable level of validity and reliability, those judgements have to be related to some pre-defined standards, allowing an as systematic and predictable (reliable) assessment as possible.

O'Grady suggests that factors of evidence[3] are:

- *Authenticity* (whether the presented evidence is an accurate reflection of the factual skills);
- *Actuality* (whether learning is "up-date" or not);
- *Relevance* (relation between the presented evidence and the standard it is meant to represent);
- *Quantity* (length of experience in the area assessed);
- *Variety* (of situations and contexts in which a certain skill has been used).

These criteria are closely linked to the existence of a predefined system of vocational qualifications (NVQ or SVQ). The same applies in the Dutch case, where a national system of

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[2] A good example of this is the Swedish Official Document SOU 1992:7

[3] Bom/Klarus/Nieskens (1997) have used these evidence factors as a basis for the Dutch system now being tested, combining them with the core-evidence being used in the portfolio-process

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predefined qualifications has been developed in recent years. Researchers evaluating the British NVQ-system are concerned about the quality of the standards themselves, indicating that they are too narrow and rigid and fail to identify and assess the broad learning that takes place outside formal education and training (Wolf 1997).

The elements of evidence used by O'Grady as well as Bom et.al. thus should be supplemented by criteria reflecting the basic logic of experiential and non-formal learning.

3.3.3 The logic of non-formal learning

The logic of non-formal learning can be analysed according to three analytical constructions. Firstly, through the conception of *learning as situated practice*, formulated by Lave/Wenger (1991); secondly through the *skills-stage theory* developed by Dreyfus/Dreyfus (1986), describing the elements integral to the transition from novice to expert.

Thirdly, the picture will be "completed" by using Engeströms (1993, 1996) critical elaboration of the situated, practice-oriented approach, underlining the distinction between *learning as reproduction and learning as transformation*. This last perspective is important in order to be able to understand the innovatory potential of non-formal learning.

All the three approaches share the basic notion that learning and knowledge formation cannot be judged exclusively on the basis of objectivistic criteria, but have to be understood according to the social situation and the social context where it occurs. By bringing these perspectives together, the logic of non-formal learning will hopefully become more transparent, thus providing a basis for the development of assessment criteria.

Lave/Wenger (1991) point to the fact that learning is frequently conceived as a process by which the learner internalises knowledge, whether "discovered", "transmitted" from others, or "experienced in interaction" with others. By introducing the term "legitimate peripheral participation", they have articulated an alternative perspective on learning, providing a potentially better basis for understanding and identifying the various aspects of learning and knowledge formation. The core-elements of the approach are presented in the following way:

Table 1:

Five Stages of Skill Acquisition

Skill level	**Components**	**Skill acquisition**	**Perspective**	**Decision**	**Commitment**
Novice	Context-free	recognition of objective facts; acquiring of rules for action; delimited knowledge	None	Analytical	Detached
Advanced beginner	Context-free and situational	experience through practical situations	None	Analytical	Detached
Competent	Context-free and situational	adopting procedures of decision making; choosing own plans	Chosen	Analytical	Detached understanding and deciding. Involved in outcome
Proficient	Context-free and situational	intuitive understanding based on similar experiences; analytical procedure	Experienced	Analytical	Involved understanding Detached deciding
Expert	Context-free and situational	mature and practised understanding;	Experienced	Intuitive	Involved

Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986: 51

This approach focuses not only on the *relational character* of learning, but also on its *negotiated character* and the *concerned and engaged* nature of learning activities. The individual learner is not gaining a discrete body of abstract knowledge which he or she will then transport and reapply in later contexts. Instead, he or she acquires the skill to perform, by actually engaging in the process. A skilful learner acquires the ability to play various roles in various fields of participation. This involves the ability to anticipate, a sense of what can possibly occur within specified contexts (Hanks 1991). Mastery involves timing of actions relative to changing circumstances: the ability to improvise.

On the basis of a number of case-studies of apprenticeship, Lave and Wenger conclude that the practise of the community creates the potential "curriculum" in the broadest sense - that which may be learned by newcomers.

The distinction between non-formal and formal learning is articulated through the distinction between a learning curriculum and a teaching curriculum.

A *learning curriculum* consists of situated opportunities for the improvisational development of new practises (Lave 1989). It is not something which can be considered in isolation or analysed apart from the social relations that shape participation. A *teaching curriculum*, in contrast, is constructed for the instruction of newcomers, the meaning of what should be learned is mediated through an instructor's participation, by an external view of what knowing is about.

Returning to the challenge of assessing non-formal learning, the change in perspective suggested above is consequential. If the challenge of assessment relates to the learning curriculum, the task is more complex, but on the other hand closer to the characteristics of the "broad knowledge base", referred to earlier in this chapter.

The approach of Dreyfus/Dreyfus (1986) can be used to identify and clarify some of the characteristics inherent in the process of situated learning, formulated as five steps from novice to expert (table 1):

The *novice* is able to recognise various objective facts and features relevant to the skill in question, and to acquire rules for determining actions based on these facts and features. At this stage, the elements of knowledge are fragmentary and not related to the context, neither are the rules governing action.

In the last step, the *expert* generally knows what to do based on mature and practised understanding. Deeply involved in coping with the environment, however, he or she does not perceive problems in a detached way, when things are proceeding normally. Experts, in this definition, do not solve problems and do not make unusual decisions, they do what normally works.

Neither Dreyfus/Dreyfus nor Lave/Wenger are ignorant of the fact that learning can also be a process whereby new knowledge is created. Their approach increases our understanding of how newcomers move towards full participation in the community of practise, but is less related to the *renewal and innovative potential of knowledge*.

Engeström (1993, 1996) addresses this problem by introducing the distinction between *learning as reproduction* and *learning as expansion*. The question is, what kind of learning is required to cope with challenges in complex and ever changing environments? Routine practises are often accompanied by learning that may be described as reproductive; aiming at the socialisation in and the reproduction of existing practises.

The focus of Lave and Wenger on adopting existing practises can also be viewed as something negative, especially if the existing way of thinking and acting is a barrier to improve a practise. Too strong an emphasis on reproductive learning may lead to a situation where the practitioners take their practises as given, and try to do things exactly the same way as before. These kinds of strategies may, in the long run, prove negative.

Engeström has developed the notion of learning as expansion through the conception of an *expansive cycle*. The expansive cycle begins with the individual questioning the accepted practise, and is gradually expanded into a collective movement. Engeström points to the fact that an important part of all learning and finding solutions to problems, is related to the *initial understanding and definition* of the problem to be solved.

In an organisational setting, Engeström divides the expansive model into seven stages, starting with questioning, criticising and rejecting some aspects of accepted practise, and ending with reflecting and evaluating the process of problem-solving and consolidating it into a new stable form. An interesting parallel to this model is the one presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), which attempt to use the concepts of tacit and explicit knowledge in order to understand knowledge creation and innovation.

The contributions presented above can be looked upon as ways of clarifying the somewhat vague conception of a "broad knowledge base" as introduced in recent political documents. In this context, their contribution is double: while underlining the complexity of the matter, they also illustrate, on the basis of the key-processes described, possible starting points for the development of assessment criteria.

3.3.4 From research-perspectives to assessment criteria

The operationalisation of research perspectives into practical assessment requires compromises between what is possible and what is consistent. The following distinctions may represent a starting point for an integration of research and practise with the overall objective to improve current methodologies.

Different modes of learning can be made visible through Lave and Wenger's distinction between the teaching and the learning curriculum. This distinction clarifies the difference between learning through (external) instruction and learning through participation.

Each mode of learning, by teaching/instruction or through participation, can be made visible through a systematic and guided description of (i) *the context in question*, (ii) *the participation actually having taken place* and within this context and (iii) *the identifiable tasks* being conducted.

A checklist proposed by Bjørnåvold (1997) defines these three elements which could be developed in order to identify central characteristics of the learning processes.

4. THE LEGITIMACY OF ASSESSMENTS

O'Grady (1991) is of the opinion that sufficient methodological quality - validity and reliability - will make individuals, enterprises and public authorities accept the assessments being made. This is, in our view, questionable. The value of an assessment (in the labour market, in educational institutions and in society in general) and the acceptance of non-formal learning is not only a question of their *legal status*, but also of their *social legitimacy*.[4] The aspect of legitimation has so far received limited attention from researchers on the topic of assessment.

4.1 The scarcity of knowledge information

Assessing learning can be elaborated from a number of disciplinary perspectives. Riel Millar, in a report published by OECD, provides an interesting human-capital[5] approach to the question of assessing learning and knowledge. His discussion of how to establish universally recognised and reasonably secure mechanisms for the accounting of human capital assets in the enterprise as well as in the public domain, is closely related to the question of how to establish legitimate methodologies and systems for the assessment of non-formal learning. In spite of differences in terminology, economists seem to face many of the problems already identified as intrinsic to the assessment of non-formal learning. This includes the problems of methodological quality as well as the problems of institutional and public legitimacy. This (somewhat surprising?) parallellity is linked to what we may characterise as *the information dilemma* facing current societies: In spite of the growing importance of learning and knowledge, the quality of information available to those (individuals, enterprises, public bodies) making choises on the use of human capital is questionable. The lack of commonly accepted methodologies and systems, on national as well as international level, partially explain why this is the case.

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[4] We prefer to use the concept of legitimacy instead of O'Grady's acceptability/credibility. The concept of legitimacy has traditionally been related to Max Weber's classical typologies of legitimate authority; legitimacy based on tradition, charisma and rationality. Today's debate is more focused on the relationship between authority and normative agreement (Habermas 1981, Held 1987).

[5] Human capital is defined as the knowledge that individuals acquire during their life and use to produce goods, services and ideas in market and non-market circumstances. Of theoretical reasons, the source of knowledge acquisition (formal or non-formal, family or school, job or leisure) is ignored, as is the spesific nature of the knowledge and the method for validating or certifying it.

Due to fundamental changes in the economic structures of the OECD, the need for recognised accounting and assessment mechanisms is, according to Millar, increasing. The essence of this structural change is captured in passage from Deiaco et.al. (1990):

"..the 1980s have seen changes in the nature of investment. The relative proportions of physical and intangible investments have changed considerably. For example, some measures show that total industrial intangible investment had passed physical investment in Germany, Sweden and the UK by 1987. Other evidence of the changing nature of investment is the increased complementarity between physical and intangible investment as well as the high technology content in both kinds of investment. these trends are transforming the structure of productive assets." (page 1)

So far, and regardless of the growing importance of knowledge in the economy, comparatively little has been achieved as to the measurement and pricing of human capital. In spite of a vast research-interest in accounting-questions, no widely recognised methodologies or systems have been introduced. Keith Drake (1997) formulates it in the following way:

"For want of agreements on rules or conventions, all knowledge assets are left off corporate balance sheets, with only the rarest exceptions, such as the value of football players in the accounting of their clubs." (page 1).

Discussions on reporting and accounting of human capital as an asset seem to run into two immediate obstacles. First, most current certificate-based measures of human capital are deemed inaccurate or exclusive to the firm and therefore inadequate for assessing productive potential. Then, secondly, without adequate measures of acquired competence, there is little incentive for individuals or firms to collect or develop high quality human capital information. Thus, the absence of efficient and accurate systems for validating the productive competency of human capital undermines efforts to engage in financial accounting and reporting of such assets. And, without practical recognition of human capital as an asset there is little incentive to establish even inexpensive systems for the identification (OECD, op.cit.).

Millar is of the opinion that it is possible to overcome the theoretical and methodological problems related to accounting for intangible assets. And in some respects, the conditions for arriving at such a mechanism, are improving. A general trend towards the strengthening of the institutional and regulatory preconditions for the assessment and accounting of learning and knowledge may be observed (CEDEFOP 1997). This trend is transparent on different levels:

- The individual level: As indicated elsewhere in this volume, assessment of prior and non-formal learning is growing in importance, the number of countries introducing such methodologies and systems is increasing.
- The enterprise level: For enterprises, there is a gradual move towards financial accounting and reporting of intangible assets, including new methods for reporting human capital.
- The government level:. Some effort can be observed as to introduce new methods of accounting for public expenditures on human capital, along with modest reforms to the structure and functioning of educational systems.

However, as already stated, such methodologies and systems require a legitimate basis. Millar is of the opinion that the state has to play a decisive role in this respect, and the question is:

"...how can governments encourage the accounting and reporting conventions that would facilitate the development of human capital information and decision making appropriate to emerging circumstances?" (page 81)

To start with, a primary option for the state in order to encourage more effective systems, is to define and establish "collective parameters" and guard the general interest when it comes to defining competencies, assessment methods and recording conventions. This is not very different from the role played by the state in relation to the market; certain general laws and basic institutions govern the "free" competition between the economic players. To undertake this regulatory tasks, institutions have to be simultaneously *inclusive, decentralised* and based on a *common, general framework*. Millar is using a CEDEFOP-report, dealing with the "Social Dialogue" (1988), to underline the prerequisites for such a (seemingly conflicting) combination of objectives. The report says:

"While observing the necessary flexibility and job mobility, more importance has to be attached to the definition and necessary demarcation of jobs without referring to guilds and fellowships. It can only be successfully guaranteed, however, by including the various interest groups. Such a definition cannot be prescribed by legislature alone. It must be accomplished by compromise among the various groups, which do indeed have highly conflicting interests. ...without local control and without the assistance of those involved and their representative organisations, i.e. in particular without the co-operation of the workforce, it would hardly be possible to develop an adequate policy in the area of vocational and continuing training, which would be able to satisfy the demands of a highly developed society." (page 93)

From this general statement, it is clear that the role of the state should not consist in dictating the framework and the guiding lines for the new methodologies and systems. Rather, the role has to be understood as a careful orchestrating of different groups and interests through a conscious design of legitimate information-channels and institutions. The state has to try to balance the competing interests of employers, employees, educators, professional associations, citizens etc. Legitimate and widely accepted mechanisms for the validation of learning can only be established on the basis of this kind of broad-based participation. In order to be able to reveal the stocks and flow of human knowledge, this co-operative effort, facilitated by public bodies, is of central importance.

This underlines that the need for knowledge information only partly can be met through the introduction of purely technical solutions. Proper solutions must take the broader social setting of the methodologies into account, and focus explicitly on the questions of acceptance and legitimacy. One possible strategy is to look closer into interrelation between institutional design and legitimacy.

4.2 Institutional design and legitimacy

A number of recent contributions within political science (Eriksen 1993, Elster 1992, Kettner 1993) have focused on the *relationship between institutional design and legitimacy*, and it is our belief that these (general) perspectives may be of some use for our understanding of the legitimacy of the new assessment methodologies and systems. If this understanding is correct, *the design of institutions* may thus be of critical importance to the decisions (validations) eventually being made within them. If institutions are expected to be legitimate the following criteria should at least be satisfied (Eriksen op.cit.: 49):

- All relevant participants must be heard and all relevant participants must acknowledge (be conscious of) their own interests.
- All relevant information must be delivered
- The different interests represented and acknowledged should be balanced and the abuse of power should be sanctioned.

In this perspective, institutional design is about balancing and co-ordinating *existing* positions and *given* objectives in a way that is generally accepted (Eriksen op.cit.: 49). However, many institutions have to *develop* goals and to (gradually) *arrive* at a common understanding. This is basic to innovational activity, and also to democratic institutions trying to interpret and define changing values and needs. In these cases, the process of deliberation[6] has to be built into the institution. Some writers have described these different approaches through the distinction between "instrumental" and "communicative" designs of institutions (Eriksen op.cit., Habermas 1994). Others (Bjørnåvold and Hernes 1992) have described this as a distinction between "closed" ("closed" in the sense that existing objectives and positions are given) and "open" institutional approaches ("open" in the sense that it is open for deliberation). Kettner (op.cit.) has suggested some aspects which could be used to evaluate whether institutions tend to be "open" or "closed":

- Have debates been open for all competent participants, for those affected by the issues, and have the arguments of those not present been listened to?
- Have the debates been balanced in the way that participants have had the opportunity to express their attitudes and wishes, in a way that reflects their status as autonomous participants.
- Have the debates been transparent, thus reducing the impact of narrow strategic oriented action (and this reduction should not take place through external intervention, but mutual agreement).

The institutions now being set up to validate prior and non-formal learning, and accounting of intangible assets, could be evaluated against such general standards and within such a context. Because many of the institutions involved are in the process of being set up or have been operational for a short time, objectives and methods are not fixed, but have to be gradually developed. This underlines the need for an "open and communicative" approach. Because the legitimacy of the new forms of validation depends on a *mutual* recognition of basic objectives and standards, institutional form should support this kind of mutual deliberation. According to Colardyn (1996), three institutional elements (linkages) are necessary in order to establish confidence. There is, as we can see, a close relationship to the general points made above:

- Existing criteria for qualifications/skills have to be reflected and integrated into the system on a permanent basis. This implies that the formal education and training system has to be represented and allowed to express its views and specific interests.
- The needs of enterprises must be reflected and integrated in the system on a permanent basis. This implies that the flow of information must be organised in such a way as to be accepted by those participating.
- Social partners must participate in the system on a permanent basis. The legitimacy of the system would be seriously affected if an imbalance of interests should be suspected.

Apart from these dimensions, reflection should be given to the question of centralised versus decentralised approaches. Existing validation systems vary somewhat in this respect (CEDEFOP 1997, op.cit.). A centralised system may be viewed as more trustworthy in the sense that it is more homogenous and coherent. A decentralised system may, on the other hand, be viewed as trustworthy in the sense that the flow of information is more effective and organised on the basis of detailed knowledge of participants and their needs. The question of legitimacy is important to all involved in the validation process. Individuals have no interest in investing time, energy and money in validations that eventually prove to be of little worth. The same can be said of enterprises and societies.

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[6] On the topic of deliberation, Aristoteles (1987:77) says: "Deliberation occurs in cases which fall under a general rule, if it is uncertain what the issue will be, and in cases which do not admit of an absolute decision". Eriksen (1995:17) says: Deliberation is needed when it is uncertain what would be the most rational and sensible solution, but when the topic involved is of such a character that it is possible to reason over. In a democratic setting, it is basic that decisions should be qualified. They should not only reflect the pleasure of those in power, strong groups of interest or pure chance, arguments should be decisive, and it is this argumentative process which constitutes democracy.

The discussion of the legitimacy of the new methodologies and systems for assessing non-formal learning, as well as accounting human capital assets, is still in its infancy and may be characterised as embryonic. This includes the political debate as well as the debate among researchers. As indicated, this may be due to the fragmentary status and the novelty of the systems. It may also be interpreted as a reflection of the dominating perspective on learning and knowledge-formation: More or less conscious, people tend to treat knowledge as something objective, either true or false. This obscures the fact that an important part of all knowledge-formation is closely related to social processes and social interpretation, the value of the knowledge being intrinsically related to the social acceptance or non-acceptance. The politically defined objective to increase the value of learning taking place outside formal education and training have to take this social character of knowledge into consideration: We do not only talk of a technical integration of objective knowledge-elements. Rather, we also talk of a social re-definition of what is valuable and not-valuable knowledge. This is why the question of legitimacy of institutions ought to be a central topic for researchers and politicians

4.3 Introducing a new currency

O'Grady (1991) is of the opinion that sufficient methodological quality (defined as validity and reliability) will make individuals, enterprises and public authorities accept the assessments being made. As we have indicated above, this is highly questionable. The value of an assessment (in the labour market, in educational institutions and in society in general) must be understood according to its social *legitimacy*. The acceptance of assessments of non-formal learning is not only a question of their *legal status*, but also of their *legitimate status*. It is possible to introduce a law attributing a certain value to an assessment, but it does not automatically follow from this that the general public or the labour market find it justified. The fact that different groups may view the question of legitimacy in different and even conflicting ways, increases the complexity of the matter. Herrmann Müller-Solger (1996) illustrates the intrinsic social character of assessments by comparing them to banknotes:

"Man hat Zeugnisnoten mit Banknoten verglichen. Der Einzelne will möglicht viel davon haben und sie möglichst vorteilhaft einsetzen. Der Abnehmer (der Arbeitsgeber oder die Bildungseinrichtung) will in bezug auf die Aussagekraft der Zeugnisse sicher sein und nach Möglichkeit den Preis drücken…Es gibt Inflationseffekte, Auf- und Abwertungen und eine immer währende Spekulation. Es scheint Zeitgenossen zu geben, die sich den Tauchwert von Zertifikaten und Zeugnissen offenbar ebenso gesichert wünchen wie den der Zahlungsmittel, mit festen Preisen im Inland und festen Wechselkursen oder zumindest engen Wechselkursbrandbreiten im Ausland." (page 2)

Müller-Solger points to the fact that an assessment (or a certificate) always will be open for interpretations and subject to a never-ending negotiation of value/price. On an individualistic level, these processes can be compared with those of barter. Subjective and context-bound elements will inevitable be of some importance to the final value attributed to the assessment, in some cases even more important than the formal assessments and/or certificates available. This element of negotiation is also present on a societal level. The case of University Diplomas illustrates this; previously representing a secure "passport" to employment, their value has been significantly reduced in several countries. This is not only a question of competition in the labour-market, but has also to do with the changing value standards of societies. We believe that the same negotiation processes, even more explicitly, will be present in the case of assessment of non-formal learning.

The metaphor[7]of currency/money, presented by Müller-Solger, is useful by highlighting some of the mechanisms involved in the assessment of non formal learning and the accounting of non tangible assets. Using Talcott Parson and his investigation into "the medium of money", this becomes very clear. Parsons basic argument is that money can be understood as *a code*,

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[7] The concept of metaphor is used in the sense introduced by Morgan (1987

providing certain information from holder to receiver. Money are valid in a predefined set of standard situations, they must be based on a generalised value (accepted not only in a legal sense, but also on a popular basis) and they must be measurable. According to this interpretation, money must thus be able to "store" and to "measure" value. If we compare the function of money to the function of barter in traditional societies, interesting differences occur. Barter, mediated through direct communication, can only be valued according to the specific context where it is taking place. Money, on the other hand, *retains it value irrespective of the context in question.* This contextual detachment and separation *implicates a simplification and standardisation of the information stored by money.* Compared to the information provided through barter, which is multidimensional, money provides information that can be characterised as one dimensional (Habermas 1981b).

Applying this perspective to assessment of learning, several parallels can be identified. In the same way as money, assessments can be understood as a code, providing information from holder to receiver. An individual applying for job, using assessments of prior learning or some form of certification exemplifies this. Assessments are valid in a predefined set of standard situations, the labour market, the internal job hierarchy in an enterprise and the system of education are examples of such predefined situations. Assessments must be based on some form of generalised value, not only legal but also legitimate. Finally, they must be able to measure, to give a valid and reliable picture of the learning being assessed. According to this interpretation, assessments of non formal learning (as is the case with diplomas and certificates in general) must be able to store information, to measure the learning/knowledge in question and the value attributed to it in the broader setting of the labour market, the educational system and the society in general. But like money, assessments necessarily provide (store and measure) simplified and standardised information. The degree of simplification and standardisation will, of course, vary. But as illustrated in the discussion of methodologies for the assessment of non formal learning elsewhere in this volume, a certain simplification is unavoidable.

The processes attributing a certain value to learning may in several respects be compared to those operational in the monetary system. And as Max Weber points out

"It is true that by law and administrative action a state can today insure the formal validity of money…but actually this formal power implies nothing as to the substantive validity of money; that is, the rate at which it will be accepted in exchange of commodities. Nor does it yield any knowledge of whether and to what extent the monetary authorities can influence its substantive validity."

In order to move from this negative description of the prerequisites for validity, we believe that the following aspects/areas must receive attention in the time to come:

- *Simplification and standardisation*: Applying the picture of assessments as a form of code, transforming a complicated set of information into a standardised and simplified language, we can foresee certain limitations. If the simplification and standardisation becomes too radical, the information value of the assessments could be reduced to such a degree that the overall legitimacy of the approach is threatened. Some of the electronically based expert systems (presented elsewhere in this volume) could very well face this problem. In this respect, the difference between money and assessments is clear. The strength of the medium of money lies in its ability to simplify and standardise, the weakness of assessments may very well lie in its need to simplify and standardise.
- *Predefined standard situations:* The actual use of assessments will, eventually, be limited to certain standard situations. On a theoretical level, these situations are envisaged to occur as individuals try to enter the labour market, try to access certain levels of the educational system or try to improve a position in an internal job hierarchy. So far, the actual definition of situations and areas where this "currency" is valid, has not been concluded, not even started in some countries. The actual testing (acceptance or non acceptance) in the market and by the educational system is of course the most important part of this definition process. To some degree, however, it is also dependent on the legal definitions presented by the state.

In this respect, the difference between money and assessments is limited. Standard situations may be legally defined, the actual definition must, however, take place in a direct "confrontation" with employers, institutional bodies etc.

- *A storage of value*: The degree to which assessments actually will be able to store value will, as indicated above, basically be determined through the actual acceptance/validation by employees, employers and educational authorities. The legal status of the assessments may, however, be of a certain importance. In some countries, the authority to regulate and "stamp" assessments may be divided between different (and sometimes competing) authorities. If this is the case, one of the preconditions for arriving at legitimate methodologies and systems could be endangered. This does not mean that strict centralisation is needed, rather that responsibilities should be defined in a clear and transparent way. In this respect, assessments can be compared to money, the issuing of currency is intrinsically linked to a clear and accepted basis of authority.
- *Inflation and speculation*: Like money, the actual (day to day) value of the assessments will be vulnerable to changing levels of acceptance and legitimacy. This will be linked to aspects mentioned above, but must also be understood as a reflection of the total amount of learning/knowledge assessments circulating. It is paradoxical that the introduction of assessments of non formal learning (accounting of human resources) takes place in a situation where the number of people entering formal education, and receiving formal certification, is higher than ever before. It is reason to believe that the value, and legitimacy of the new forms of assessments partly will be defined in confrontation and competition with traditional, formal assessments. This is clear when we consider the fact that the value of formal certificates have changed, and that we can observe a inflationary tendency; increasingly higher qualifications are needed in order to compete within the labour market.

In the end, *the strength of the new assessment approaches will be defined by their ability to provide information - to the holder as well as to the receiver of the assessment.* A major weakness characterising traditional certificates, is that they provide a too limited and simplified picture of the individual in question. If assessments of learning are supposed to achieve some legitimacy, they have to face this challenge: not only do they have to cover other forms of learning than those covered by traditional certificates and diplomas, the also have to provide a qualitatively better picture of the learning processes. If this is not the case, the legitimacy and the value of the assessments being made, will be questionable.

5. THE QUESTIONS OF FEASIBILITY AND COST

The transformation of research perspectives into practical assessment is a complicated process where compromises between what is possible and what is theoretically consistent may be necessary. One possible alternative is to try to identify the most important limits of feasibility; thus establishing as realistic a point of departure as possible. The identification of feasibility limits may take place along two very different paths. Firstly, the feasiblity of assessment is limited by the character of the learning process in itself. It may be argued, as already done by several authors (Polanyi op.cit., Dreyfus and Dreyfus op.cit.), that certain kinds of human knowledge is inherent and difficult/impossible to verbalise (and delimit). Secondly, the cost of producing an assessment of non-formal learning is critical to the overall feasibility of the methodology. The balance between gain and loss (complicated by the fact that it will vary at different levels) will increase in importance as the methodologies and systems mature.

5.1 "Knowing how" and "knowing that"

Simplification is a necessary consequence of any assessment of non-formal learning. This simplification may vary in character and scope, but is probably not entirely avoidable. Even the dialogue-oriented approaches (like the Dutch, the Irish etc.), explicit in their focus on the situated character of learning, must, compared to "real life", simplify and reduce. This is not only a question of practical limitations (the length of descriptions). It is just as much a question of principal limitations; some elements of learning "resist" this kind of simplification, tending to lose their specific value in the transformation from "doing" to "description". By overlooking this danger, assessments run into the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (op.cit.) illustrates this problem by using the example of riding on a bicycle. Although you may know how to ride a bicycle, it is difficult if not impossible to formulate the specific rules intrinsic to this knowledge. The ride is safe because you possess what Dreyfus and Dreyfus describes as "know how", acquired through practise and painful experience. The fact that you can't put what you have learned into words means that know how is not accessible to you in the form of facts and rules. If it were, you could say that you "know that" certain rules produce proficient bicycle riding (p.16). Not confining this phenomena to bicycle riding, Dreyfus and Dreyfus points to the fact that all of us know how to do innumerable things that cannot be reduced to "knowing that". If you are an experienced carpenter, you know how to use tools in ways that escapes verbalisation. Normally, we take this know how so much for granted that we don't appreciate and recognise the extent to which it pervades our activities. This is perhaps most apparent in situations where this "know how" deserts us. A sudden reflection on the activity (how we ride the bike, how we use the hammer), may interrupt our intuitive and non-reflective attitude towards these activities. It is reason to believe that an important part of what we identify by the concept non-formal learning belongs to this area of "know how". Indeed, if we follow the argument of Dreyfus and Dreyfus, the five steps from novice to expert are characterised by the gradual change from "knowing that" to "knowing how". Or as they formulate it (page 35):

"What should stand out is the progression from the analytic behaviour of detached subjects, consciously decomposing his environment into recognisable elements, and following abstract rules, to involved skilled behaviour based on an accumulation of concrete experiences and the unconscious recognition of new situations as similar to whole remembered ones. The evolution from the abstract toward the concrete reverses what one observes in small children dealing with intellectual tasks, they initially understand only concrete examples and gradually learn abstract reasoning."

To some extent, testing of individuals in an authentic context may identify "know how" of this kind. In spite of this, the transformation of this kind of intuitive knowledge to validated, officially stamped elements of knowledge, is a difficult one, in need of further elaboration.

5.2 "I know" and "we know"

Some researchers are of the opinion that it is paradoxical to attribute learning to organisations. Individuals learn, not organisations! At best, they state, the notion of organisational learning can be used by the distant spectator or by treating the entity in question as an impersonal agent. However, it is a fact that that when individuals fail to enter into the stream of distinctly organisational thought and actions, organisations tend to know *less* than their members do. And conversely, there are situations in which an organisation seems to know *more* than its individual members (Argyris and Scön 1996). This has been recognised by practitioners as well as researchers working in areas associated with "Organisation of work", "Industrial Organisation", "Human Resource Management" etc. Learning is a reflection of a learning environment, determining learning through structures (linked to communication, information and incentives) and through interaction patterns (values, feelings, meanings, atmosphere etc.).

Put together, this environment is of crucial importance and influence the knowledge of an organisation in a decisive way. As we already illustrated in our discussion of situated learning, the knowledge of individuals cannot be properly understood if studied in isolation of its environment. This becomes even more critical if the issue is the added value created by individuals co-operating, - collective learning and organisational knowledge. The extent to which assessment methodologies should be expected to and are able to reflect this added, collective value is uncertain. Simultaneously, politicians as well as researchers seem to hope that this will be possible. As we have already have pointed to, aspects like team-work and co-operative skills rank high among the non-formal skills expected to be identified and assessed (European Commission [White paper], 1996, page 14). It is, in our opinion, misleading to imply that assessment of individuals can give a fair representation of organisational and collective learning. This does not, however, imply that the environment and the context in which the individual is learning should be excluded, rather that the limitations of the assessments should be clearly understood.

5.3 Economic feasibility; the question of gain and loss

Judging the feasibility of assessment methodologies, experiences from research on learning and knowledge processes can be consulted. A high degree of validity and reliability, it seems, depends on a combination of research strategies. Formulated above as a combination of "chasing the decimal" (the quantitative approach), "pressing the flesh" (the qualitative approach) and "producing the effect" (the experimental approach). Following our theoretically based investigations into the character of non-formal learning, the quest for methodological diversity seems to be relevant to the design of assessment methodologies in the same way as it is to the design of research processes. In the context of assessment, the quantitative approach can be paralleled by standardised expert systems, the qualitative approach by a dialogue based approach and the experimental approach by various tests.

This optimal solution may, however, prove difficult to reproduce in a setting characterised by the constraints of time and economy. A recent survey of the British APL-process by the Department for Employment and Education, documents that assessment costs vary according to the array of services attracted and according to the individualistic character of the process (DfEE 1997, reported in CEDEFOP 1997). Where information is readily available and a candidate is able to seek information and endorsement directly from the employer, the process of APL is considered cost effective. If this is not the case, the process can be "frustrating and costly and little to show for the candidate's efforts" (CEDEFOP 1997 op.cit.: 39).

As there is little need for complicated and expensive methodologies focusing on "readily available information" (already described and formalised), the question of cost, understood as the readiness to allocate resources to the assessment of non-formal learning, becomes critical. Future design of methodologies for the assessment of non-formal learning thus have to confront the distinction made by Simon (op.cit.) between what is optimal and what is satisfactory. Satisfactory methodologies for the assessment of non-formal learning has, however, to consider the specific character of learning; providing guidelines as well as limitations for the design of assessment methodologies

6. CONCLUSIONS

As we have tried to illustrate, assessment of non-formal learning is so far an area that has received limited attention from researchers. The majority of contributions consists of descriptions or comparisons of the methodologies and systems being established so far; relatively few contributions deal with the more basic questions related to the quality of the methodologies and the legitimacy of the institutions.

However, and as we have tried to show, "neighbouring" research may be of value in order to improve the understanding of new methodologies and systems. On the basis of these contributions, the conclusion could be formulated in two questions, indicating two main directions to be followed by research in the time to come:

- Are the *methodologies* currently being set up able to assess and measure what they are supposed to assess and measure?
- Are the *systems and institutions* currently being set up designed so as to support the social re-definition of what is valuable and non-valuable, valid and non-valid learning and knowledge?

These two questions may serve as focal-points for multi-disciplinary research effort. As illustrated above, different disciplinary approaches - from (social) psychology to human capital accounting - may add important perspectives to a topic and field of increasing importance.

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THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

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1. SUMMARY

Comparative studies in *Comparative Education* are becoming increasingly important within the framework of the debate on globalisation and increasingly close political alliances. In the field of Community educational and vocational training policy, the European Union has, e.g. by means of the Leonardo Da Vinci programme, provided major stimulus for *Comparative Research in VET*. Besides the „professionals" involved so far, many other people (research scientists, politicians, social partners etc.) will also have to enter the field of comparison or are being forced to interpret the results obtained in a critical manner. Caution must be used when applying the results which are drawn not only from quantitative and/or qualitative scientific studies but also from statistical ones. We have demonstrated in various examples how misinterpretations are possible and the norm.

Furthermore, it could be proven that the methodological concepts are often not substantiated in studies on *Comparative Research in VET* and in many cases are purely coincidental. For a number of research scientists the methodological issues were of marginal importance. That is why the results are not free of controversy already because of the missing methodological basis. Critical assessment of research results, in which the methodological concept and the main interest of the comparison have not been revealed, should therefore be initially conducted on this level. It may be the case that a review of the methodological substructure will also lead to a review of the study results.

In the case of our stocktaking, which repeatedly establishes the link to the underlying discipline of *Comparative Education*, the decisive importance of the methodological approach for the research results of *Comparative Research in VET* and also in the neighbouring disciplines could be proven.

2. WHY COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN VET?

The national economies of the industrialised countries are experiencing a fundamental structural change from production-oriented to service-oriented societies. System thinking as well as the ability and willingness to engage in lifelong learning are emerging as indispensable vocational qualifications. The degree to which VET systems are prepared for this challenge varies greatly in the industrialised countries. Nobody would dispute the immense importance of VET for the economic and social development of national societies and supra-national organisations, such as the EU. This relationship is underlined in Articles 126 and 127 of the Treaty of the European Community. It has become almost a truism, and not only the conviction of experts in the field to state that purely national solutions to economic problems are hardly feasible any longer.

The Study Group on Education and Training set up by the European Commission argues in a similar manner. Its report (1997) takes up the guiding principles of the White Paper on *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society* (1996), examines them in greater depth and makes recommendations which stress the major importance of the development of general education and VET for the accomplishment of European identity, the switch to a cognitive society and for economic performance in a global society. This report repeatedly mentions the importance of *Comparative Research in VET* for the further development of education and vocational training systems. „Devise common methods for the evaluation of education and training based on experiences on national levels, in order to benefit from a comparative dimension." (p. 31)

„Evaluation must aim to make comparisons over space and time of education and training outcomes. Therefore, a precise definition of what is to be evaluated, and the criteria by which this is to be evaluated, are essential. In particular, evaluation should focus on learning outcomes: what have pupils learned? However, evaluation must also take account of the effects of the environmental context; evaluation should neither inhibit nor punish." (p. 134)

Due to the strong international interdependence, research evidence that could serve as a stimulus or a basis for system reforms, currently discussed or already started in many countries, can best be found in *Comparative Research in VET*.

Also in the first *European Report on Research and Development in VET* there is a series of studies on a comparative basis. At the conference about the situation of preparatory work for this report, the *Conference with the Contributors to the Report* in Thessaloniki in July 1997, the need became very clear for critical analysis of the methodology and theory of *Comparative Research in VET*.

Analysis has already been undertaken on several occasions about which methodological problems occur in the international comparison of education and vocational training systems (system approach) and/or their functions (problem approach) on the macro, meso and micro levels on the basis of quantitative, qualitative or mixed data (Lauterbach, Mitter 1994; Lauterbach 1995, 1997).

In this connection reference is made to only a few OECD studies. Again and again the phenomenon can be observed that statistical data from various countries, the accuracy of which is never challenged, are compared without the subjects of this metric comparison being analysed in greater detail. School leavers (upper secondary graduation) with a final certificate from general secondary level II (general education) are estimated by OECD to account in Germany for 22.6% of the population of that age, those from the vocational channel for 65.9% of the population of that age. The two figures are then added together. The proportion of graduates with a final certificate then accounts for 88.5% of the corresponding population. These results do not take into account the fact that 15% of the pupils in initial vocational education or trainees are school leavers (upper secondary graduation) with a final certificate from general secondary level II (general education). If we add this 15% to the above 22.6% then the result is slightly higher than the official German statistics. It is not a matter of proving that the OECD statistics have been calculated wrongly. That is certainly not the case. The reason for the incorrect portrayal lies in the additive definition of general and VET education in secondary level II and inadequate knowledge of the system. With that knowledge it would have been obvious that, beside the additive definition, there was also an overlapping integrated definition which meant that the graduates from general education apart from moving on to higher education also moved to VET and that this was on a large scale in some countries.

For other countries, too, statistical data are classified in a more formal manner, i.e. according to the name of the institution. The very low proportion of graduates from general secondary schools (secondary level II) can only be explained for Italy if the institutions such as in *istituto magistrale*, *istituto technice* etc. are classified as vocational schools although, to an increasing degree, the graduates can only do something with the university qualifying certificate issued there (maturitá) and the vocational certificate issued within this dual qualification is not well received on the labour market. It would be more appropriate to classify statistical data according to the actual function of the educational institution rather than according to the designations which, as we have shown here, can easily be misleading (OECD 1997, pp. 133 - 138).

This example stresses the importance of methodology also when comparing metric data. If a more precise definition of the areas of comparison, general and VET in secondary level II had been given and there had been more extensive knowledge of the systems, this comparative „venerable“ principle of comparative education which states that a study design for comparative studies can really only be developed by scientists who have extensive knowledge of the system (Barber 1972, 1974).

In international competitions (Skill Olympics) the Republic of Korea and Japan always chalk up excellent results. Since 1977 Korea has won the competition nine times in a row. Japan, too, has a very good track record. We should not forget to mention the excellent performance of the participants from Liechtenstein either. When evaluating this information it is easy to establish a connection with the performance of the VET-System particularly when arguments are based on the prosperity of the national economies in Japan and Korea.

„The skill Olympics are mainly oriented towards mono skills and not towards proving complex vocational ability. The Koreans have shown all other countries that they are prepared and capable of the highest performance in special skill training (...)

For Koreans successful participation in the Skill Olympics serves several purposes. Firstly, this has to do with attracting attention within society to technical-vocational training as an important national task. Secondly, it is a matter of winning international recognition as an industrial nation which is to be taken seriously“ (Georg et al. 1995, 1997, p. ROK-99).

What conclusions are to be drawn for Comparative Education and *Comparative Research in VET* ? When selecting and interpreting descriptive/qualitative data, which have been collected by means of exact empirical methods in the social sciences, standards, evaluations and structures are contained which are integrated into the cultural context of the countries/ cultures selected for the comparison. Karl Popper (1971, p. 75 f.) remarked very accurately in this respect:

„The empirical basis of objective science is not absolute, science is not built on a rock. It is rather a marsh over which the cool construct of its theories rises [...]“

The idea that the facts can speak for themselves, does not take into account how these facts were created and what is done with them. Nor is it a new approach to say that Comparative Education works with hypotheses. The primary values should only have priority when determining and substantiating hypotheses. This is the only way in which the components which are the determining factors for an education and VET system can be identified. In the case of so-called value-free hypotheses as the basis for descriptions, analyses, juxtapositions and comparisons, erroneous interpretations are inherent in the method since every research scientist is limited in his perception and is biased because of his own conceptual-ideological ideas (paradigms) concerning how the world is structured (Barber 1974, p. 244).

The first task of *Comparative Research in VET* can only be to counter these „misunderstandings“ by means of a critical approach to the text and by means of a fundamental methodological structure which does not deny cultural background and values.

These examples reveal that *Comparative Research in VET* is still in the teething stages of its development. Unlike Comparative Education, *Comparative Research in VET* cannot build on almost 200 years of development as an (also internationally) well-established scientific discipline. So far, the various comparative concepts have not even been reviewed. To sum up, it can only be deplored that *Comparative Research in VET* has not made the expected progress judging by the constant increase in international interdependence and mobility. This applies not only to goods and services but also to vocational qualifications.

These theoretical deficits of *Comparative Research in VET*, which focus on questions concerning the VET of young persons and adults, can no longer be justified given the steadily growing political, economic and cultural interdependence on the supra-national level, e.g. in the European Economic Area within the EU. In this context we can take up the analyses and recommendations of the Study Group on Education and Training which in an *Annex on the comparison of education and training* systems suggests the setting up of a study programme within the EU in order to undertake comparative analyses of systems (p. 153).

This paragraph explains why comparison is an important precondition for obtaining knowledge about which sciences and contents are of importance for *Comparative Research in VET* (1997). The discussion of methods, which is currently being conducted in *Comparative Research in VET* is nothing new for *Comparative Education* and for *Comparative Research*. For these disciplines there are reliable findings on the methodology of comparison which form an excellent basis for comparative research in the field of VET. That is why they are extensively referred to. Finally, an overview is given of the methodology and current situation in *Comparative Research in VET* in Europe. The conclusion of this stocktaking ends with a proposal for the methodological approach in studies in the field of *Comparative Research in VET*. In the synoptic overview, statements are made about the development of research in VET within the context of the European development.

3. CLASSIFICATORY ISSUES

3.1 Comparison as a Basic Methodological Principle in Science

Comparisons are not distinctive features of Comparative Education, International Education, International Education in VET, or of *Comparative Research in VET*. As we know from anthropology *„It is only in comparison with others that it is possible to understand itself"* (Tedesco 1994, p. 1) and, therefore, comparisons with other societies are an essential prerequisite to understanding one's own society, one's own position and ultimately oneself.

Similar to Comparative Education, International Education focuses on the supra-national problems of education systems and those problems that are specific to any one education system. It uses the theories and methodologies of history, philosophy and social science. *Comparative Research in VET* has to incorporate several problem areas that are not traditional subjects of Comparative Education, such as the labour market and other contextual conditions, e.g. cultural context social legislation and economic structure. There is a whole host of phenomena.

The comparative method is common in most social sciences and is of great importance to research (Berstecher 1994). Equivalents in other academic disciplines are, for instance, Comparative Economics, Comparative Political Science, Comparative Psychology, Comparative Sociology.

3.2 Comparative Education, International Education, Comparative Research in Education

While *Comparative Education* as an academic discipline proceeds in an interdisciplinary manner, drawing on the qualitative and quantitative methods of related disciplines for its own issues, *International Education* focuses on international, practical projects, e.g. the support of projects in developing countries and international co-operation in VET, and accompanies the work of actors, such as students, researchers and experts.

Comparative Education is an academic discipline. The main interest of researchers in this field consists in finding out why education systems and education processes in the broadest sense vary in their international development, how (under which conditions) they function and they develop.

Any comparison of systems and specific functions of systems is an intercultural comparison. It is not statistical correlations that help to gain an insight into systems and their functions but the far-reaching preliminary understanding of the various historic, cultural and socio-economic interrelations in the various cultures. „Understanding/comprehending" thus includes not only statistical correlations – which cannot be established without a „hermeneutic contextualization" – but often has to take into account highly complicated interrelations that are difficult to grasp. Although the first representatives of Comparative Education, including Julien de Paris and Sadler, could not draw on quantitative methods in the modern sense of the term, they arrived at similar results concerning the tasks of Comparative Education.

Saul B. Robinsohn supports this approach and believes that intercultural comparison contributes to the transparency of the national education system and helps to challenge the principles and structures of the national system. The comparison also yields valid information and knowledge on foreign education systems, thus contributing to understanding of those systems and to international understanding in general (Robinsohn 1969).

International Education (IE) takes up its findings of Comparative Education, of which it is a part (Epstein 1994). In addition to research supporting individual projects, International Education focuses on the internationalization of the educational process and on International Organizations. It accompanies the processes of actors, such as students, researchers and experts and those of facilitating organizations, such as the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO.

Comparative Research in Education as the interdisciplinary form of Comparative Education conducts studies primarily on the education system in the context of social, economic and political development. Sociological, psychological, economics and legal issues, therefore, play an important role. Researchers draw on the findings of these disciplines to give comprehensive answers to the questions of Comparative Research in Education.

3.3 Comparative Education in VET, International Education in VET, Research in VET, *Comparative Research in VET*

In a seminal paper on the *Use of a Comparative Economic and Vocational Education* Czycholl discussed the name of our research subject. Despite the impetus of Czycholl (1970, 1975) and the attempts of Abel (1962, 1966), *Comparative Education in VET* is a new academic discipline. One should not forget the contribution of Aloys Fischer, who, as early as 1926, held lectures on foreign education systems (Kreitmaier 1950). But only European integration and international co-operation in VET led to the emergence of new topics and to a training need, which challenges a comparative discussion of other national VET systems and the influence of political and economic associations, such as EU or NAFTA, onVET. This academic discipline is in the development stage, and so far there are only a few postgraduate programmes of studies in this field.

International Education in VET as a practice-oriented discipline is gaining importance especially in the framework of international co-operation in VET and within the European Union. It uses the findings of Comparative Education in VET, of which it is a part. Main areas of work are, in addition to the monitoring of projects, the internationalization of educational processes and the International Organizations.

Research in VET deals with those phenomena of education and VET that are directly or indirectly related to employment, to working life or to the acquisition of (vocational) qualifications. It examines the conditions, processes, and consequences of the acquisition of these specialist and extra-functional qualifications, including the context of the cultural, social, technical, political, historical, and economic conditions, e.g. the personal and social attitudes and manners that appear to play a role in the training for and the participation in organized (vocational) processes of work. The VET system has to be put into the context of the education system as a whole (Schmidt 1995; Buttler 1995; Teichler 1995; Kell 1996).[2]

Comparative Research in VET as a special type of Research in VET looks at the international development of the objects of Research in VET from a comparative point of view and makes its findings accessible to and usable for policy advisers in the national context and international organizations and associations. Approaches, however, focus on interdisciplinary (Fischer 1967, p. 58 f.) subjects, dealing with VET in the context of social development, especially the economy and the labour market.

Comparative studies are common practice in the framework of European policy in the area of VET, e.g. in the programme LEONARDO or in studies commissioned by the European Commission or by CEDEFOP and the ETF. A number of researchers, who often concentrate on co-operation in VET, work internationally, as do organizations, such as OECD, UNESCO, with its suborganization UNEVOC, ILO and the World Bank.

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[2] Vocational training research also deals with areas such as "changing vocational learning" (3rd forum on research in VET 23-24.09.1997 in Nuremberg Programme printed in: Zeitschrift für Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik, 92(1996)6, pp. 649 - 650.

3.4 Main points of *Comparative Research in VET* in the EU

In the first chapter the importance of *Comparative Research in VET* was identified for the further development of VET in Europe and the fundamental importance of comparison in order to obtain findings within research. An explanation was also given as to why many scientific disciplines are involved. This was followed by a classification of the scientific disciplines concerned.

We have now described the general framework for our subject *Comparative Research in VET*. Besides we have to state that several countries do not distinguish between Comparative Research in Education and *Comparative Research in VET*. It is more likely that a researcher comes up with questions concerning the education system, with a focus on VET.

The complex nature of the area to be examined has to do in our opinion with the two systems of formal vocational education: Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Continuing Vocational Education (CVT). What was not included in some parts of Europe, particularly southern Europe, is the important area of informal VET e.g. en passant apprenticeship in a non-formalised form. Things become even more confused in respect of the area under examination when formalised and informal vocational education is brought into major correlations which are important for its function in respect of its economic and social dimension and for system or functional analysis. The scale of complexity facing international *Comparative Research in VET* is already obvious for the socio-economic area in respect of the matrix of Manfred Tessaring (1997) which could certainly be simplified and a proposal by Pekka Kämäräinen about the main focuses of current research in VET in the EU:

- Social and economics research;
- System research (also individual functions) and policy research;
- Social and educational research.

The specific research interest should focus on topics, such as the legal regulations and the freedom of setting up business, the mutual recognition of diplomas, examination certificates and other credentials, the transparency of qualifications, the special significance of VET within the complementary social and labour-market policy (EU social funds). In addition, any questions on the relationship of the structure and the curricula of general vs. VET are of universal interest, especially with regard to the question of the international trend towards an increase in the mobility and flexibility of vocational requirements. *Comparative Research in VET* has to incorporate several problem areas that are not traditional subjects of Comparative Education, such as the labour market and other contextual conditions, e.g. social legislation and economic structure. There is a whole host of phenomena. Apart from that, system-related studies that identify general aspects of development and sharpen the awareness of fundamental questions are of great value as the basis for problem approach studies and for policy advice.

3.5 Pluridisciplinarity

The methodology of comparison is relevant in all scientific processes where *comparing* is applied as the approach to the acquisition and enrichment of knowledge and the advancement of knowledge standards. Comparative methods are inherent in *all* scientific disciplines and areas. This has to be traced back to people's capability to correlate persons, facts and events. Elementary statements already include reproductions of relations, i.e. comparisons about „comparable" subjects, even in cases where the speaker is not conscious of it. The comparative methods which are used nowadays in research processes can look back to a millennia-old „pre-history", as mirrored in artefacts of „popular culture" as well as in the oeuvres of literature, science and philosophy.

The step from pre-scientific to scientific comparison, i.e. to its systematised conceptualisation and application, coincided with the development of modern science *per se*. Comparative education boarded the train at an early stage, namely with Marc-Antoine Jullien De Paris and his brochure „Esquisse d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée" (1817/1992). Since the end of the 19th century it has occupied a solid, though never uncontested place in the science system. The reasons why this place has been controversially discussed until today, are multifarious, covering the wide range between the very definition of the discipline and its policy-oriented task. Its dependence upon and/or its relations to „supra-ordinate" scientific disciplines are especially noteworthy.

The cross-national debate is closely connected with the question concerning the allocation of Comparative Education to the *humanities* (Geisteswissenschaften) or the *social sciences*. The worldwide range is dominated by the latter option which was founded in Great Britain and the United States from where it has gradually expanded all over the world. On the other hand the inheritance of the „humanistic" (geisteswissenschaftlich) tradition, referring back to Wilhelm Dilthey, was repressed for a time without having disappeared yet from the agenda. The continuation of the fundamental debate, though from differing positions and with changing argumentations, has been continually signalised by „wars of paradigm" (Heynemann 1993). It seems that in recent years this debate has calmed down with the development of Comparative Education into a pluridisciplinary research area called *Comparative Education Research*. The recent trends indicating in Europe the formation and development of *Comparative Research in VET*, can be considered as an „offshoot" of that supraordinate development.

Pluridisciplinarity, above all, means that Comparative Education as part of the educational sciences, is dependent on close co-operation with adjoining social and behavioural sciences on the one hand: sociology, economics, political science, psychology and anthropology (in particular with regard to cross-cultural comparisons). Further orientation leads to the humanities (see above) and also the laws, since comparisons of legal systems and structures have recently gained increasing importance, in line with the demand for „harmonisation" in international organisations and, even more so, in supranational institutions, such as the EU.

As a corollary of recent orientations of theory and practice in Comparative Education to „evolutionist" targets and the „World Systems Theory" its previous commitment to the *history of education* has been revived. Formerly this commitment had been caused by its „humanistic" roots (Hans 1955, Schneider 1961), while the current trend is stimulated by questions of how and to what extent empirical findings and social theories can be made fruitful for comparative educational studies (Schriewer 1984)[3]. In spite of these basic differences concerning the embeddedness of Comparative Education in pluridisciplinary structures, the „old" and „new" commitments to historical issues share the question of the extent to which comparative analyses can contribute to the examination of „universal" or „pluralistic" components of educational problems.

Comparative Research in VET derives this pluridisciplinary network from Comparative Education with all its connecting lines. Given the interdependence between VET and the employment system, *economics* plays a dominant part as a neighbouring discipline.

Moreover, *Comparative Research in VET* has to take into special account development and progress in the pluridisciplinary area of *technological* and *engineering sciences*, wherever curricular issues of VET (including aims and objectives, contents, methods and evaluation) are investigated.

3.6 Subjects of Comparative Research

Until recently studies in Comparative Education were focused on *international comparison*. This primary orientation has not become obsolete at all, owing to the historical fact that the formal education systems („schools") of modern times as the preferable themes of comparative inquiries, have been products and institutions of *state policies*. Needless to add that the responsibility of the modern State in this respect has not fundamentally changed over the past three or two hundred years, irrespective of its development from its absolutist through its constitutional to its democratic variation. Changes on the political map (by movement of borders as well as by the collapse of „old" and the emergence of „new" States) have always had their impact on norms and contents and, moreover, left their traces in the instruction and training methods and in the educational styles. These statements are, in principle, also true of *private schools* and of schools for ethnic and religious minorities. Therefore in comparative studies and inquiries „States" and „nations" play an outstanding role as basic parameters.

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[3] In this context it is worthwhile examining Schriewer's efforts to identify the influence of the *Systems Theory* (Niklas Luhmann) on Comparative Education, preceding his recent orientation to the *World Systems Theory* and its transfer to sociology and education.

Responding to social, political and cultural upheavals in the global, regional and national dimension and to their effects on the education systems, comparative educationalists have broadened their epistemological and pragmatic interests to the following areas:

On the one hand their attention has been attracted by non-formal and informal educational processes and, consequently, by subjects of comparison „below the State level": by families, schools, local communities and intranational regions. In this area *Comparative Research in VET* is offered a wide thematic field, insofar as VET, in contrast to general (liberal) education has always been characterised by more or less „distance from the State" (albeit in the framework of legislative and administrative rules). This peculiarity of VET can be related to the power and influence exercised by schools, firms and (in particular in the past) families on organisation and curriculum. Therefore the interrelation between „proximity" to and „distance" from the State can be identified as a focal comparative theme in empirical and prospective views. For instance comparisons of VET Systems (including structures, curricula, achievement standards and outcomes, social stratification among the trainees, qualifications of the teachers etc.) in two or more big cities (e.g. Birmingham/Milan/Toulouse) and firms (e.g. Volkswagen/Volvo/Renault) are worth being initiated as prospective inquiries. Finally it seems reasonable to apply this range of comparison to the training policy of *multinational firms* under various national *and* cultural framework conditions.

On the other hand the crises of the nation-state and the world-wide migrations of the 20th century have resulted in the emergence of new and/or the manifestation of existing, but latent multicultural societies whose members are marked by ethnic, religious and/or social identities. In this context emphasis has to be placed upon the *comprehensive* range of *culture*, which must not be reduced to ethnic concerns, as is often practised in „multicultural" studies. This is why the educational problems of cultural units have become more and more relevant. In Comparative Education these trends have led to the constitution of the *intercultural comparison* alongside the international comparison as its „older" counterpart. It can be referred to subjects of comparison to be discerned inside a State, but also to those which are of cross-national range (e.g. Basques in Spain and France, Turkish migrants in Germany, France and the Netherlands; children of rural background in urban communities of different ethnic and/or religious background). The topicality of intercultural comparisons is, moreover, reinforced by the formation of *cross-national regions* (e.g. Alsace/Baden/Basle), linking them with the analysis of interregional comparisons of the aforementioned intranational type. With regard to history, placement, workforce and production, *Comparative Research in VET* opened up a wide range of questions, posed by the categories of „industrial culture", „labour culture" and „firm culture", in correspondence to the category of „school culture".

3.7 Dimensions of Comparative Research

As regards *dimensions* of comparative analysis, one can make a distinction between two research types which have developed during the 20th century. In its first half Comparative Education was dominated by the drive for *total analysis*[4], related to national education systems in their historical frameworks. Since the sixties the growing consciousness of the impossibility to meet such a far-reaching claim by means of empirical analysis or detailed text interpretation has led to the device of the *problem approach* which gained remarkable importance[5]. Its main value for Comparative Education is based upon its providing an open path to investigating „functional systems equivalencies" at various levels of education (e.g. content and subject-matter in the curriculum of learning and training, qualifications for the employment system, time to be consumed for required achievements). Its basic dimension comprehends the *macro-level* of national or regional education systems, while the *micro-level* of educational practice has become worth exploring to an increasing degree, too. Micro-inquiries deal with closely confined events or processes, whereby the range can vary according to the geographic, temporal and thematic limit. Recently they have become more and more topical with the growing significance of „autonomy" or „self-government" of decision-making at the level of low organisational units (in *VET* e.g. firms and schools).

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[4] This dimension can be exemplified by Nicholas Hans' studies on „educational factors and traditions" and by Friedrich Schneider's concept of „impulsive forces" (Triebkräfte), both approaches related to national educational structures (see Hans, *loc.cit.* and Schneider, *loc. cit.*).

The diversification of the problem approach has however been balanced by a certain revival of the *total analysis*, caused, in Comparative Education, by the reception of approaches derived from system and evolution theories[6], though now including empirical findings *Comparative Research in VET* may be especially stimulated by the recent confrontation of universalistic (as demonstrated by the World Systems Theory) and cultural-pluralistic (as demonstrated by cultural anthropology) views to pose new questions. New themes and projects may originate from the awareness that predictions about reasonable and optimal strategies in VET cannot be concluded only from identifying „functional equivalencies" in their instrumental limitation, but need to include responses which are necessarily rooted in the interpretation of culture-bound attitudes: to labour, profession, mobility, morality, etc. In such an approach the confrontation between universalism and cultural pluralism as focal impulsive forces for thinking and acting becomes manifest in the tension between people's ability to respond to the challenges of *globalisation* (at various levels: economic, technological, social, political, scientific) and their ties to „their" specific cultural frames of reference. Such reflection points the way to both „international" and „intercultural" concepts.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Basic Issues

Fritz Seidenfaden established the thesis „that each scientific discipline in which the comparison is to be applied as a productive approach, has to face specific problems resulting from the structure of the particular subjects of inquiry (Seidenfaden 1966, p. 14). This thesis makes reference to the fundamental interrelation between subject and method. Three decades before Friedrich Schneider had expressed plausible doubts concerning the definition of Comparative Education, based upon the application of a *method* instead of a *subject* of knowledge and research (Schneider 1931/1932, p. 247). It should be added that this issue has not left *Berufspaedagogik* in Germany unaffected in the sixties and seventies. To give two examples, Jürgen Selzam identified the comparative method as „the principle of identity of the Comparative Wirtschaftspaedagogik (research on economic education) (Selzam 1968, p. 64 f.), while Reinhard Czycholl (1975), similar to Seidenfaden, argued „that methods are remedies bound to the attainment of scientific aims"; however, Czycholl also remarked that „each scientific discipline must, among others, use the comparative method in the pursuit of its aims" (p. 4).

The exemplary retrospect to the argumentations points the way, on the one hand, to a fundamental classificatory problem of Comparative Education and, consequently, of *Comparative*

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[5] Its most prominent representative is Brian Holmes who made his elaborate studies on the basis of hypotheses which were derived from educational theories (cf. Holmes1965).

[6] In this context it is also worthwhile to refer again to Brian Holmes who, in his late oeuvre, turned his attention to the analysis of comprehensive problems, and that by the identification of „ideal-typical normative models" derived from his studies on Plato, John Dewey and Soviet education. Thus, before the recent trends he re-discovered the wider dimension of *total analysis*, though, in contrast to the aforementioned 'classical' comparative educationalists, contenting himself with testing the *probabilistic* and *epochal* conditions concerning the topicality of educational problems (cf. Holmes 1981).

Research in VET and, on the other hand, to their *continuous* task to develop and refine their methodology by looking for stimulation and suggestions for their neighbouring scientific disciplines. It is the fundamental interrelation between subject and method to which all methodological considerations need to be referred. The second source of this task is identified by the aforementioned *pluridisciplinarity* of Comparative Education and *Comparative Research in VET*.

4.2 Categories of Comparison

Every comparative inquiry must be rooted in the researcher's expertise of *base*, *process* and *aims* as the fundamental categories of comparison.

The *base of comparison* is determined by the comparability of the subjects which have been taken into account, as well as by the definition of „the common factor enabling comparison" (Seidenfaden 1966, p. 62). This factor, constituting the supraordinate frame of reference, is called *tertium comparationis* and derived from the subjects of comparison which, related to the existence of two subjects - are defined as *primum* and *secundum comparationis* (Eichberg 1972, p. 21). The identification of comparability rests upon establishing a categorial and thematic interrelation between the chosen subjects „aimed at equality (congruity), similarity (affinity) and diversity (discrepancy)" (Hilker 1962, p. 100). Contrary to the popular assumption of „equality", comparability in scientific comparison is dominated by topics suggesting „similarity" and also „diversity". The identification of the *tertium comparationis* lays the ground for the elaboration of *comparative indicators*, according to the questions which are to be investigated.

As regards conceptualising and implementing, the individual methodical steps in the *process of comparison*, the scheme, proposed by Franz Hilker in a representative way, were considered as the „classical" patterns. It is composed of:

a) the *description* of the chosen subjects of comparison, based upon the collection of data and other sources;

b) the *interpretation* of each subject of comparison in the framework of overall educational as well as political, economic and cultural conditions, with special regard to the historical factor;

c) the *juxtaposition* consisting of the descriptive and interpretative results of the preceding inquiries on the individual subjects, primarily by the application of schemes in tabular form;

d) the (proper) *comparison* as the comparative interpretation of the inquiry on the whole.

This „classical" pattern has been gradually refined and replaced by classificatory models which serve the heuristic function of the comparison to a more stringent and precise degree. As a paramount example the methodical model devised by Saul B. Robinsohn (1973) merits special attention, all the more so as it illustrates its direct orientation to the methodology of modern social sciences in principle; he speaks of (pp. 324 f.):

a) the „idea" (analysis of a given situation or problem, examination of available sources), becoming materialised in a *hypothesis*;

b) the identification of *relevant data*;

c) the establishment of *variables* and the determination of *comparability* (of the chosen subjects);

d) the repeated *modification* of hypotheses and data collection (according to the demands inherent in the context);

e) the activation of *previous knowledge*;

f) the establishment of the tertium *comparationis*.

This refined pattern includes flexibility towards further differentiation as well as re-arrangement. Nevertheless the „classical" pattern has survived in many comparative studies. In particular, *Comparative Research in VET* is still widely dominated by *juxtapositional* descriptions in tabular form which is suggested, above all, by the outcomes of quantitative analyses.

The third category is indicated by the *aim* each comparative inquiry is related to. *Firstly*, it determines the progress and direction of the heuristic operation, whereby „explaining" and „understanding" can be considered as the focal variations (see below).

Secondly, the aim is rooted in the fundamental question, to which degree the application of comparative methods points the way to the generation of generalising theories and, moreover, permits predictions or judgements about „universal" trends of evolution, perhaps even the identification of „laws" concerning the relations inside the education system as well as between this system and the processes in the society on the whole. In Comparative Education this far-reaching issue has always played an important role.

On the one hand, in this context special reference has to be made to the *trend analyses* having been continually conducted by the big inter- and supranational organisations, such as UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank, ILO, the Council of Europe and the EU. Furthermore, the aim of comparison has been increasingly stimulated by the question on how and to which extent international and intercultural comparison can make its contribution to *building theories on modernity and post-modernity* with regard to their *globalising* trends. In particular, this question was updated through the stimulating impacts of the *World Systems Theory*, conceived by I. Wallerstein and its further elaboration in the sociological theories by J. Boli, J.W. Meyer and F.O. Ramirez and the comparative educational studies by Christel Adick (1992) and Jürgen Schriewer (1994).

On the other hand, Comparative Education is regarded as a field of research, which is open to *quasi-experimental* inquiries, this assumption to be traced back to Emile Durkheim's thesis about the quasi-experimental function of comparison in the social sciences. According to this assumption the international and intercultural comparison can be utilised as an *ex post facto* instrument for testing existing theories or single hypotheses. Within this function the comparison is „theory-bound in that sense that only entirely determined and problem-relevant empirical findings are selectively compared with regard to their compatibility with the theory to be tested" (Czycholl 1975, p. 11). Harold Noah (1971, pp. 507 f.) even stated that Comparative Education is not aimed at „enriching and extending the meaning of country names as far as possible; instead we attempt to fill general, 'regular' and system-crossing statements with substance by introducing country (i.e. system) names only at that point where our power of making careful and cross-national generalisation is not sufficient. A comparative study is, according to its function, an attempt at replacing the names of systems (countries) by indicators for concepts (variables) to a wide degree".

Contrary to these evolutionist targets outstanding comparative educationalists, such as Joseph A. Lauwerys and Franz Hilker, took the distinct position that the comparative method does not possess any „nomethetic power", nor can it be classified as a „normative science" (Lauwerys 1958, pp. 65-77; similar: Hilker 1962, pp. 136-138). In the beginning of the seventies Dieter Berstecher and Bernhard Dieckmann updated the contestable plausibility of evolutionist concepts in educational studies, particularly with their inherent statements about *inevitable* trends (Berstecher 1970, pp. 91 f.; Dieckmann 1970, p. 12). Their arguments, reinforced by references to lacking data and indicators have not lost their topicality until today, although the recent efforts undertaken by OECD and other international organisations and agencies signal certain progress in overcoming existing deficits[7].

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[7] Remarkable, though improvable, examples of this progress are demonstrated by: OECD (1995): Education at a Glance. OECD Indicators, and OECD (1996): Employment Outlook.

Thirdly, the identification of the aim of comparison is closely related to the controversial question, to what extent Comparative Education can make its contribution to the *improvement* of education and schooling and offer provisions for the devising of guidelines for actions[8].

4.3 Two Main Methodological Approaches

The methodology of Comparative Education is rooted in the dualism of two main methodical approaches which have been embedded in science theory as well as in the history of education. They are defined by the concepts of *hermeneutics* and *empirical analysis*. These two approaches, in their turn, are characterised by internal differentiation and have distinct impacts on the conceptualisation and realisation of comparative inquiries.

The *hermeneutic* approach is aimed at „understanding" by means of interpreting „texts" and at a history-based perception of reality and ideas; it has been developed in the *humanities* (Geisteswissenschaften). The „classics" of humanities identified „texts" in their capacity as written documents, first of all of literary or historical nature; in recent years, however, this classification has been gradually extended and diversified. Nowadays hermeneutic interpretation includes, besides written documents, „texts" produced and transmitted by the media (e.g. films and videotapes). In the *Comparative Research in VET* „texts" of both types consist of primary sources, e.g. legal documents (bills, laws, decrees, curricula and syllabi, time-tables etc.), didactic and methodical recommendations and guidelines as well as textbooks on the one hand and secondary literature, provided by various studies on VET and curriculum development in this area.

The hermeneutic approach is complemented by the *phenomenological* approach, to be derived from Edmund Husserl's philosophical school of phenomenology. Hermeneutics and phenomenology, applied as competing methodical approaches, share access to life situations both on the base of the scholars' own experience and their aspiring for „understanding" them; moreover, the legitimacy of their interpretative efforts is given by the *intersubjective verifiability* of their judgements. On the other hand they disagree with each other in that the hermeneutist relates his subject of research to its *historical* background, while the phenomenologist's interest is focused on the holistic interpretation of every life situation including questions about the emotional sphere of human attitudes and actions. Already at this point the comment may be justified that the phenomenological approach can make noteworthy contributions to Comparative Education, whenever attitudinal issues are put on the agenda. Yet, *Comparative Research in VET*, at least with respect to its *current* aims and tasks, is hardly in need of its application.

It goes without saying that the *analytical-empirical approach* has developed into the main, if not until today exclusive methodical instrument in *Comparative Research in VET*. It can be identified as the express counterpart, and at the same time, competitor of the hermeneutic approach in Comparative Education, having been developed and elaborated in the course of the 20th century. Special attention has been attracted by the comparative projects of the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA), which have been conducted since the sixties, focused on the assessment of subject-bound school achievements. Their outcomes have been increasingly appreciated by national and international educational authorities. The various methodical schemes and measuring instruments have been gradually diversified and refined which makes the IEA studies excellent models for *Comparative Research in VET*, both at the conceptual and the instrumental levels.

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[8] In this context it is worthwhile to make reference to Wolfgang Hörner's classificatory model of „functions" to be allocated to Comparative Education. He distinguishes between (a) the *idiographic* function (search for the specific), (b) the *melioristic* function (search for better models), (c) the *evolutionist* function (search for the trend of evolution), (d) quasi-experimental trend (search for the universal). While the melioristic function can be immediately derived from the practice-bound motivation underlying comparative research, the three other functions are closely connected with the place, allocated to Comparative Education by the comparative educationalists as well as by their „neighbours" in the context of the science system (see above).

The analytical-empirical approach has been adopted from the social sciences; it determines the „social science quality" of Comparative Education which, in turn, takes itself an active part in its further elaboration. It is aimed at „explaining" facts, relations and trends. In its first period, lasting over several decades, it distinctly concentrated on *quantitative* analysis, in particular by collecting and analysing *statistical data*. By introducing data analysis into the comparative process, it offers the possibility to search for „regular covariations". Saul B. Robinsohn presented the following exemplary pattern: „If there arise in the situations, S^1, S^2, S^3 ... the columns A and B, but in the situations S^4, S^5, S^6 ... A-modified and B-modified, and so forth in growing precision, one can conclude from this a regular interrelation between A and B" (Robinsohn 1973, p. 316).

The further progress of quantitative methods and their implementation in research practice has recently been accompanied by the devising the testing of *qualitative methods*. Within the comparative methodology they are applied in form of *ethnographic inquiries* and *case studies*. While contributing to the diversification of the analytical-empirical approach, these methodical counterparts also give rise to the „re-discovery" of the hermeneutic and the phenomenological approach which had been somewhat repressed in the past decades (see above). As regards instrumentation, qualitative inquiries, on the one hand, adopt and adapt the basic instruments having proved their worth in quantitative inquiries (questionnaires, standardised interviews), while, on the other hand they make use of semi-standardised and open interviews as well as of portfolio techniques based upon written, tape and video records. In this context the „rediscovery" of the hermeneutic approach is materialised by the revival of „text interpretation".

Concerning the priority or even the exclusiveness of analytical-empirical against the hermeneutic approach, Comparative Education was dragged into the cross-disciplinary „struggle of methodologies" which culminated in the late sixties and early seventies. Since the beginning of the seventies, however, the development has been marked by the „reconciliation" of both approaches, insofar as widespread acknowledgement concerning their legitimacy has been reached. For Comparative Education Dieter Berstecher made the representative statement that „metrics" and „hermeneutics" must be conceived as „elements of one and the same method" (Berstecher 1970, p. 77-82), this notion being used as the amalgamation of both approaches to be subsumed to the „comparative method". This definition of „method" is different from its application as a sub-category of these „approaches" which is synonymous to „procedure", „instrument" or „technique". In Berstecher's terminology „metrics" comprises all procedures which are based upon measurement and, consequently, empirical analysis. His definition makes reference to both the humanities and the social sciences as the „roots" of the „comparative method". Needless to emphasise that the reduction of both approaches to „elements" presupposes a concept of „education" (Paedagogik, Erziehungswissenschaft) which denies any *clear-cut* allocation to *one* of both roots" (*hermeneutics* and *empirical analysis*). Berstecher's statement is congruent with Robinsohn characterising the „comparative method" as a „combination of historical interpretation, functional analysis, quantitative data processing and utilisation and, finally again, synthesising interpretation of the causes and the direction of a prospective or intended change"(Robinsohn 1973, p. 325).

The opposition of the analytical-empirical and the hermeneutic approach reveals that quantitative data as well as qualitative statements are open to comparative analysis and interpretation. Data processing, *per se*, resting upon mathematical and statistical inquiry, implies comparison; under this aspect *every* correlation and ranking can be taken as a kind of comparative method. On the other hand modern qualitative comparison refers to systematised content analysis for the sake of the identification of *functional equivalencies* or, as long as the hermeneutic approach is applied, to the traditional patterns of text interpretation.

Considering comparative educational inquiry in the *concrete* decision-making situation, the choice of *one* of the main methodical approaches is not at the researcher's „discretion", but is primarily dependent on the *aim* of the intended comparison which is conceived from the theoretical or practice-bound frame of reference underlying the initiation of the given projects. Adapting this basic thesis to the *Comparative Research in VET* entails, in the first case, opting for the generation of concepts and paradigms, e.g. concerning the function of „profession" and „training" in an economic and employment system which is focused on the postulation of mobility, flexibility and globalisation, while in the second case this adaptation necessarily leads to the initiation of projects aimed at improving the practice of employment, professional qualification and VET. In many cases the concrete project suggests the consideration of *both* approaches, according to the aim of comparison. However, even in such cases *choices* are almost inevitable with regard to the time factor (which approach has to come first or later?) or the importance each of the approaches is ascribed to in the whole research process or in its individual stages.

In general, *Comparative Research in VET* is entirely involved in the methodological considerations of Comparative Education. As regards the choice of the two main methodical approaches, the answer excludes any one-sided option. In view of the *number* of tasks to be fulfilled the demand for *analytical-empirical* inquiries is very likely to considerably increase. Wherever exact calculations are needed, valid and reliable data are required as a basis for planning, maintenance and development of institutions, the recruitment of teachers and trainers as well as pupils and trainees, the provision of budgets etc. In the first place this demand pertains to *quantitative* inquiries. However, these will have to be enriched by *qualitative* empirical studies wherever the statistical data need to be supplemented with findings resulting from observations of educational (or employment) situations and their documentation in form of the aforementioned records. Therefore, *complementary* studies are urgently needed, whereby the opposition of school-bound and job-bound training schemes (with „dual systems" in the middle) may be considered as a paramount example.

It is this very example, moreover, which justifies the inclusion of *hermeneutic* interpretation in the given project scheme. It has become evident that the quality and success of systematised and cross-disciplinary job-bound training depends on the employers' conviction of the benefit of this form of training for the *employment system on the whole*. In the planning phase already the researchers must equip themselves with *basic* knowledge about historical foundations as well as the socio-cultural context which will be hardly achievable without the reference to „texts", according to their availability and appropriateness with regard to the *aim* of the given comparative project.

4.4 Further Methodological Considerations

Beside the opposition of the two *main* methodological approaches (the hermeneutic complemented by the phenomenological one) Comparative Education methodology is influenced by the following classificatory approaches:

a) *Induction* and *deduction*: The inductive approach is based upon a „ranking order of acquaintance" which lays the ground for the determination of the subjects of comparison and the definition of the *tertium comparationis*, this criterion being the constant for the definition of the concrete variables to be derived from the preceding subject analyses. On the other hand, in the deductive approach the *tertium comparationis* is defined at the beginning (frequently resulting from a previous comparative inquiry) in the form of a categorial system. In the *Comparative Research in VET* this approach is frequently applied in big projects initiated by international organisations. Its advantage consists in the chance of a stringent and logical result. Its limited value, however, lies in the danger that the internal plausibility and cohesion of the analyses of the subjects of comparison may not be sufficiently re-examined. Furthermore, the reliability may be restricted by a static treatment of the *tertium comparationis*, and, therefore, by the neglect of modifications whose need may arise in the *process* of the inquiry.

b) *Macroscopic* and *microscopic* comparisons: The allocation of a comparative study to one of these two types can be motivated by the category within which the given comparison has been conceived and planned. This category has been identified by the *territory* (comparisons of local, regional, national or cross-national range) or by *other categories*: culture, ethnicity, social stratification, age-group. Furthermore, the decision is rooted in the choice of the dimension, defined by *total analysis* or a confined area of elements and/or *aspects*.

c) *Relative* and *absolute comparisons* are classificatory types immediately related to the issue of *value judgement*. In the American evaluation research beside Lee S. Cronbach and Michael Scriven, Robert E. Stake thoroughly investigated this issue by devising an evaluative matrix as an instrument to relate learning aims and objectives to absolute and relative norms, the latter derived from *one* subject of comparison (Wulf 1972, p. 109). The comparative analysis is aimed at the identification of „congruencies" at the beginning, in the course and at the end of the evaluation process to be attained by the comparison of structures concerning norms and observed real situations. It is preceded by a pre-stage focused on comparisons within these structures with regard to their logical and/or empirical „contingencies" (Wulf, ibid, p. 197).

d) Ekkehard Eichberg made the distinction between comparisons aimed at the exploration of *homologies* or *analogies*. Their applicability is dependent on the degree to which subjects of comparison can be identified. Attaining *homology* requires the availability of a broad comparative *base* and an elaborate scale system whose evaluation and interpretation ought to enable detailed „insight into the structures" of the subjects (Eichberg 1972, p. 24). Efforts to identify *analogy* are caused by the more or less restricted access to the subjects of the intended comparison, therefore allowing partial comparison, usually based upon the application of rough scales. Such studies can be refined in the course of the research process and, at least, end up in results to be utilised as preconditions of searching for homology. The outcomes of the comparative analogy studies are rather „modest" and their quality consequently, is restricted. However, in many cases they present the only chance of cognitive progress, in particular when required data are literally missing or unreliable. In this context the comparative researcher is frequently confronted with statistical materials whose internal gaps and deficiencies are not expressly stated - which, at the same time, refers back to the aforementioned limits of the analytical approach in general.

Finally, attention should be paid to a procedure which does not deserve the characterisation of a „method", but has become important to Comparative Education nevertheless. It is the so-called *implicit comparison* (Froese 1983; Mitter 1976, pp. 86-100) which, quantitatively speaking, may be called the widest-spread „comparative" approach, if one considers bibliographies dealing with publications in Comparative Education. It is given by the comparative educationalist's intention not to engage in an explicit and systematised comparison; yet he/she implicitly relates his findings in the area of foreign subjects (*Auslandspaedagogik*) to his knowledge and experience of his own national system or cultural environment. For example, inquiries on the French education system, even if the thematic range is equal, can differ from each other in respect of the „national background" of their authors: British, American, Japanese or German. Besides the „implicitness" can also be related to the target-group a comparative study is addressed in a special presentation, in particular a lecture or oral report. The more the author (speaker) takes the specific interests of his/her potential readers/audience into account, the more he/she will attract their attention and acceptance. The relevance of the criterion arises above all, in cases, marked by a target-group whose members are ignorant of comparative views and categories.

4.5 Possibilities and Confines of International and Intercultural Comparisons

„Comparing" can be traced back to its fundamental function of setting subjects together so as to ascertain how far they agree or disagree. In this view, referring back to its aim of determining equality, similarity and difference the range of „comparing" is, in principle, ubiquitous. For instance, the popular slogan that „apples cannot be compared with pears", can be easily contradicted by the definition of various *tertia comparationis* to be derived from their sharing common features such as plant, fruit, food, etc. or related to special questions, such as the time of ripening, the capacity of water and sugar and the degree of digestibility.

However, that does not mean that comparisons are reasonable in any case with regard to the intended aim or the given concrete situation. On the one hand confines are set by the content of the theme for choice. To give another example, it is certainly worthwhile comparing training schemes in primitive and modern cultural manifestations (e.g. „bush schools" versus forms of modern VET) in view of categories rooted in cultural anthropology or ethnology. Yet, the reply will be certainly different for those who are engaged in *Comparative Research in VET*, focusing their efforts on current or/and prospective questions and needs. On the other hand limits are set by action-oriented requirements the researcher has to meet when accepting a distinctly defined project with regard to aim, content and time. This limitation includes policy orientation in its widest sense from firm-based planning to international and supranational decision-making.

5. STATE OF THE ART: SELECTION OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON THE SUBJECT VET (METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONCEPT, SUBJECTS)

5.1 Methodological and theoretical concept of selected comparative studies and their subject

The following section takes up examples of current studies on *Comparative Research in VET* and describes the findings as well as the methodological concepts. Using the methods of textual criticism, it also examines the tension between the findings of these studies and the fundamental considerations on the methodology of international comparison developed here. The focus of attention is, therefore, on studies conducted or commissioned by international organizations and research institutions.

The publications on *Comparative Research in VET* can be standardised by their methodological and theoretical concept and their subjects. Essential questions within the theoretical concept are the determination of the aims of the comparative study, the definition of a *tertium comparationis* and the description of the chosen objects. The geographic district of the analysed studies are the EU, with the exception of those Studies with world-wide dimensions.

Frequently *synoptic studies* – the designation of the European Commission is „European Synthesis Report" – dominate in the field of VET. A typical example is the research study: *Continuing vocational training: Europe, Japan and the United States* (edited by: Brandsma, Kessler, Münch, 1996). Its contents present analyses of 19 national continuing vocational training systems. The editors of the study confine themselves to the destination of the structure of the frame with six headlines: introduction, concepts/definitions/ main characteristics, access and participation, supply and providers, demand and planning, conclusion and further development. The adaptation of the headlines within the studies is turned out in different levels. But the presented 19 studies are very informative and are a good basis for continuing comparative analysis's.

In a review of *Continuing vocational training,* Grünewald refers to the preface to the Synoptic Tables: *available data about continuing vocational education in the 12 Member States* (Grünewald 1997, pp. 46-47). He stresses a core sentence which relates to the problems of synopses:

> "The presentation of the data in the form of an overview does not mean that these data are comparable. The synoptic description of training systems and the relevant concepts listed in the annex of continuing VET in the Member States clearly show that each country has its own structure and function in the field of continuing VET. Hence in order to truly understand the tables, we have to know about these elements and concepts and from the very outset avoid comparing things which are not comparable." (European Commission, FORCE, 1992, p. 7)

Grünewald refers in this connection to the problematic nature of the *comparison indicators* and comes to the conclusion that "political decision makers, too, will not be spared having to adopt a more differentiated approach which is related to the respective national context when it comes to issues of continuing VET." He creates the link between the *synoptic tables* and the

ContinuingVET study based thereon. He confirms our findings and says that the 19 national studies are very reliable.

Grünewald did not include one statement from the preface of the *synoptic tables* [...] to avoid comparing things which are not comparable". This statement refers to a core sentence in *Theory and Methodology of International Comparisons*. In the introductory chapters we stated that the very differences between systems and system structures are only "noticed" when they are compared (European Commission, FORCE, 1992, p. 7). The problematisation of this statement in the preface would have led directly to a request being put to Brandsma et al. to give more consideration to the comparison aspects.

Unfortunately the editors do not explain the essential questions focused on the determination of the aims of this comparative study and the definition of a *tertium comparationis* in the introduction. Some authors of the national reports within this synthesis report take up questions in this dimension. They analyse the interrelations between the structures of the national VET- and education system and continuing VET. But that was not an essential question of the editors. If these national studies had been incorporated into a *comparative study*, then the hypothesis of Grünewald "that the intensity of participation in continuing training correlates to a large degree with the level of general education and initial VET which meant that continuing education was never compensatory" would have had to be re-examined.

The problem of the methodology and *theory of comparisons* is discussed in its essential dimensions by Marc Ant, Jeff Kintzelé, Anne Van Haecht and Richard Walther (1996) in a synoptic report for the European Commission: *Reporting, system on access, quality and volume of continuing vocational training in Europe*. In relation to the other social sciences they develop a methodological concept for their research.

In the editions of CEDEFOP there are a lot of *comparative analyses*, *synthesis reports* and *CEDEFOP documents* with a similar methodological and theoretical concept.[9] On the other hand the researchers in the field of VET adapt the methodological and theoretical concept of comparative education. They suggest that comparisons are confined in their results. They define fundamental issues and questions and show that there are interrelations between the subjects of research and other dimensions of the national education and VET systems and the historical dimension (Drake 1994).

The result of the analysis of reports in VET with a comparative dimension is ambivalent. But the discussion about the methodology and theory of comparisons in VET becomes more and more important. The intensity of international co-operation promotes the increasing importance of international comparisons. Within the EU the Commission, CEDEFOP, the ETF and national research institutes (BIBB/Germany, CEREQ/France) pick up more and more this dimension of *Comparative Research in VET*.[10]By way of summary, a distinction can be made between the following approaches:

- Country studies on defined areas of VET are considered in parallel without structures and the study areas being substantiated and delimited in a subject specific manner in respect of a comparison goal and comparison interest and without the *tertium comperationis* being explicitly developed. The studies which are normally conducted in parallel by different authors vary considerably in respect of the quality referred to the subject and the depth and width of examination. These research studies are very valuable as a basis for comparative studies if they succeed in modifying the structures and contents of the country studies in such a way that serious comparative studies are possible.

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[9] For instance: The coherence of compulsory education, initial training and adult education in the countries of the European Economic Area. CEDEFOP Panorama. Thessaloniki (Thermi) 1995

[10] Repeated reference was made to contributions of the Commission and CEDEFOP. *ETF* supported programmes such as Kuebart (1996). *BIBB* is conducting a series of comparative projects: cf. BMBF 1997 p. 186 sq; and working programmes of the Federal Institute for Research in VET/Germany 1995.

- In the widespread synoptic presentations or parallel country studies, often supplemented by comparative evaluative analyses, attempts are made to define and delimit areas of comparison normally without the explicit presentation and justification of the interest of comparison and the *tertium comperationis*. The contents of the comparison areas seem to stand objectively alongside each other although implied, cognition-guiding interests determine their delimitation and their contents.
- The „real" comparison research scientists rapidly fall victim to the fascination of the simplifying theory formation. Before extensive, methodologically sound country studies and complex and extensive comparison studies based thereon can be undertaken, types and models of VET must be established, sometimes with a classification of the national systems. These are often derived on the basis of sound justification but without the necessary references to the empirical foundations. In most cases the authors in Europe or around the world restrict themselves to a few concrete models in which the risk of stereotype or artefact formation (Georg 1997, p. 158) is obvious. This typificaton is not restricted to VET but is also used in general overviews of education. Vaniscotte distinguishes for example between Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Latin and Mediterranean types and classifies the education systems, including VET of the 15 Member States of the EU, using this somewhat rough classification (Vaniscotte 1996, p. 158). Within the logics of this stereotype formation the transformation countries of central and eastern Europe would have to be classified under the "eastern or Russian" type. The results obtained from a serious comparison can be found for example in Kuebart et al and in the International Handbook of vocational education and Training (IBHH) (Lauterbach 1995/1997, p. VGL - 1-132; Kuebart, 1996).

In the field of VET a differentiation according to learning venues is especially popular. These are often equated with systems of VET, for instance Münk (1997, pp. 5f.) distinguishes between full-time schools, on-the-job training and apprenticeship without pointing out that the actual learning venues (e.g. practice/company, (vocational) college and VET-Centre) are linked to different types of VET and their regulatory patterns. Lauterbach already pointed out in 1984 that the differentiation based on learning venues should be extended to at least five types (Lauterbach 1984, pp. 25 ff.). Following an extensive, empirically sound study (1995) the concepts of the dominant learning venue and guidance learning venue were introduced in order to reflect the complexity of the subject.[11] On this basis, a typification was no longer possible which would have corresponded to a priori stipulations/models. For each national path of VET in the broadest sense, the customary learning venues could be detected.

The different structures, which are identified when comparing national systems of VET, when comparing system elements or functional comparisons, can be explained by the cultural specificities and the historical context. National systems ofVET along the lines of the colloquial use of the concept system, which refers to a larger entity, do not exist in all countries. If, by contrast, reference is made to the system concept (Hörner 1996, pp. 15-17; Luhmann 1996, pp. 15 f.; Schriewer 1987, pp. 76 ff.) which has established itself in the social sciences, internal and external links are the decisive features. The demarcations vis a vis the outside world and the functional linking of the subsystems amongst each other are described as a system. These linking opportunities mean that VET can also be described in countries as a VET-System which would not have been included if reference had been made to the colloquial term.

Hence, the result is "that the national systems of VET despite obvious similarity proved to be unique when analysed in greater depth. Despite these constraints and reservations, categories and types should be established because they sharpen the eyes for structures, functions and dysfunctions which can be found beyond national borders in the national systems of VET. This increases understanding of the system and helps to avoid the creation of stereotypes and artefacts." (Lauterbach 1995/1997, p. 114-VGL)

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[11] Lauterbach (1995/1997) . Page VGL – 69 ff. and 104 – VGL. Kell (1995, p. 380) makes a similar assessment and takes the example of German vocational education (dual system) to discuss the differences between the system issue and the learning venues and shows that the discussion about the decision for dual, trial or plural system is involved.

- In a few rare cases national studies, comparisons of structural elements or functional comparisons are conducted on the basis of an explicit methodology of comparison. What can be very much recommended as an introduction to the practice-related methodology of comparison is the introduction by Wolfgang Hörner in the latest edition of Educational Systems in Europe. Unfortunately, this methodological section is not backed by comparison results. They are to be found in the Internationales Handbuch der berufsbildung or in the study by Richard Koch. In both cases they give an introductory methodological explanation of comparison (Hörner 1996, pp. 13-29; Koch, Reuling 1997; Lauterbach, Maslankowski, Mitter 1995/1997, p. VGL - 1-132)

All research scientists who work in the widest sense on comparison must face one fundamental difficulty which is the presentation of the most important concepts and the description of the systems examined in the language in which the study has been prepared. In most cases, translation is the path selected which means that the *Scuola media* ends up becoming a lower secondary school and the *Istituto tecnico* becomes a technical grammar school. If the translators "are lucky" then the concepts in the translated form correspond to the original concept but normally the meaning of the word in the different languages is not the same and this often leads to major misunderstandings. Therefore if at all comprehensible for the reader, the terms should be left in the original language. Translation should be more along the lines of a glossary. The translation should only be used in conjunction with the original language term or its abbreviation. The major difficulties to be expected in respect of the languages used are demonstrated by the many helpful glossaries which often themselves seem to fail because of the very problems described here.[12] These problems are also encountered in translations of documents on VET in the official languages of the EU. Lipsmeier und Münk illustrate the less than accurate translations using the examples of a few important key terms (Lipsmeier 1994, pp. 9 ff.).

5.2 State of the art in selected countries (France, Germany and others)

This stocktaking of *Comparative Research in VET* focuses on the theoretical approaches and, more particularly, on the methodology of the studies. Hence it is not our task to give an overview of the innumerable research projects, publications or co-operation. The evaluation alone of the research undertaken by the Information and Documentation Department of the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) into generally accessible literature and project databases on *Comparative Research in VET* in Europe revealed several hundred projects involving at least two partners and a maze of bibliographical references. The processing of this material alone would have been tantamount to a large independent project. We have selected by way of example research projects and publications. In this context, the emphasis was clearly on the methodological aspects. This selection is documented in the selected bibliography.

Comparative Research in VET, a young science, is still very ambivalent in its methodological traits. Sound methodological approaches, such as those used in the comparative social sciences, and, thus, also in *Comparative Education* as the basis for scientific studies are still not always used. *France* and *Germany* have been selected as geographical areas because in the scientific discipline of *Comparative Research in VET* they are examples of the two models and individual research scientists and research institutes co-operate on a whole range of projects.

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[12] Cf. as examples for glossaries:

EURYDICE, CEDEFOP: *Strukturen Allgemeiner und Beruflicher Bildung in der EUROPÄISCHEN UNION*. Luxemburg 1995. This publication is also available in other official languages.

CEDEFOP: *Glossarium Vocational Training*. A comparison of concepts from 12 Member States of the European Union in 9 languages. Tessaloniki 1996.

Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung: Glossar zur Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung. Nürnberg most recent edition.

Nölker, Helmut; Schoenfeldt, Eberhard: Glossar: Internationale Berufspädagogik/Glossary of International Vocational Education/Glossaire de la pédagogie internationale de la formation professionnelle/Glosario de pedagogia internacional de formation profesional. Sindelfingen 1985.

The reasons for selecting France and Germany cannot be understood to mean that both countries are particularly active in research on *Comparative Research in* VET; this can quickly be proved: research scientists in smaller geographical EU Member States such as the Netherlands, Austria and in northern European countries are heavily involved in comparative research. This is not surprising since dealing with neighbours is almost an automatic process given the geographical framework and activities across national borders in the widest sense are by no means unusual. A number of research scientists and institutes can also be named for the United Kingdom, one of the cradles of *Comparative Education*.

5.2.1 Germany

In Germany the disciplinary and institutional independence of *occupational and economic education* and *labour market and occupational research* have been guaranteed for a long time on various levels. The incorporation of teacher training into technical vocational schools in the university sector, particularly since the 1970s, led to the creation of many chairs for VET. Teacher training for vocational schools in the business sector can, therefore, look back on a tradition spanning more than one hundred years. Their academic training was very controversial with the setting up of the universities for economics already before the turn of the century. The central research institutes: *Federal Institute for Vocaional Training* (BIBB) and its precursor BBF (since 1970) and the *Institute for Employment Research* (IAB, since 1967) were set up three decades ago. Furthermore, for more than one hundred years the discipline of occupational and economic education has been on universities' curriculum. The increasing topicality of subjects/problems since the beginning of the 1990s which move beyond the borders of the single German states and the federal state horizon encouraged a more international approach to *Comparative Research in VET* which became increasingly relevant. Today the institutes for occupational and economic education at universities are increasingly focusing on international and comparative issues particularly because the research projects with a geographical focus on Europe and countries of development co-operation are becoming increasingly numerous. Here we would merely like to mention the work of Georg (Open University, Hagen), Greinert et al. (Technical University, Berlin), Lipsmeier, Rothe (Technical University, Karlsruhe), Arnold and Münch (University Kaiserslautern), Schoenfeldt (University Kassel), Böhm, Rauner et al. (University Bremen), Paul-Kohlhoff and Rützel (Technical University Darmstadt), Achtenhagen (University Göttingen, Klaus Beck (University Mainz, Dieter Euler (University Nürnberg-Erlangen).[13]

Besides the direct links of these research scientists and institutes to *Comparative Research in VET* research institutes which have their research foci in comparative education such as the *German Institute for International Educational Research* (DIPF) in Frankfurt am Main and the *Institute for Comparative Educational Research* at the Ruhr-University Bochum, or in comparative social research such as the *Institute for Social Sciences Research* in Munich, have developed a series of fundamental studies on *Comparative Research in VET*. These institutes again have a number of partnerships with university institutes or independent research institutions particularly in other European countries.

In respect of the question of interest to us concerning the theory and methodology behind the research results, it becomes clear that here, too, the assessment is highly ambivalent. The following section 5.3 examines the most important results.

5.2.2 France

In France the starting position was quite different. Here research into and the science of VET were not able to establish themselves as an independent discipline. The interest in issues surrounding VET is growing constantly but is not linked with the setting up of one or more scientific disciplines. Since the beginning of the 1970s *Comparative Research in VET* has established itself as a research area as a result of central state or regional demand. In the beginning during the expansion of the education system, research focused on providing data and information on VET. The employment crisis which entered the stage at the beginning of the 1970s, and which affected young people particularly badly, triggered a reorientation which also involved the examination of a centrally planned and controlled harmonisation of the education sector and labour demands and an improved incorporation of certain groups or training courses. These links between education and employment which have continued up to now are still more the domain of French labour sociology.

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[13] cf. also Bibliography.

Educational sociology in most industrial nations has addressed, since the mid nineteenth century within the framework of education expansion, the link between equal opportunities in access to education and social inequality. In this research field a large number of international comparative studies was also examined. By contrast, French educational sociology was characterised far more by the theory of cultural reproduction. The representatives of the reproduction theory claimed the relative independence of the cultural sphere and thus also of the school from the production sector. Since this explanation applies to the functioning of the entire education system, special issues of VET are neglected and institutions of VET are merely stigmatised as not being general. Assessed from this angle the hierarchy of general and VET schooling was strengthened. The non-general education venues were merely viewed as extensions of school learning venues which offered a second chance to the victims of school selection.

The central research institutions of *Research in VET* in the defined meaning are rather to be found outside universities. The inadequate international presence of French *Researchers in VET* has not so much to do with this constellation but far more to do with the fact that it was only from the 1970s onwards that this research area was given state assistance. At the *Institut national de recherche pédagogique*, a department for *Research in VET* was set up for the first time in 1971. The *Centre d' Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications* (CEREQ)/Marseille was founded in 1970. A greater anchoring of *Research in VET* in universities could only be observed since the 1980s; for instance the business science faculty of the University of Dijon founded in 1971 its *Institut de Recherche sur l'Economie de Education* (IREDU) concerning questions of educational science. An anchoring within educational science is moving ahead very slowly also because this only really emerged in the course of the 1970s as an independent university discipline.

The reason why the inadequate presence of French Research in VET as in comparative education is being bemoaned even today not least by the French has to do with the constitution of cognition theory and with the organisational structure of research. For instance Blossfeld and Shavit refer in a comparative study to the question, "To what extent has the relationship between parental socio-economic characteristics and educational opportunities changed over time and why?" in connection with the hypothesis based on the *theory of cultural reproduction* as developed by the French educational sociologists. In the comparative study of 13 countries, which also takes in countries like Germany, England and the USA, France is missing without any plausible reason. Aside from that this, comparative study was well developed in terms of methodology. The national studies are based on theoretically substantiated hypotheses, in some cases the same structures and a cognition-guiding issue, the *tertium comperationis* (Blossfeld, Shavit 1993).

Comparative Research in VET has been given considerable support since the beginning of the 1990s by means of the opportunities offered by the EU, e.g. at present in the EU's LEONARDO DA VINCI programme. CEREQ and other institutions, e.g. the Centre INFFO in Paris are involved in a series of studies in the field of *Comparative Research in VET*; reference should be made in particular to the work of Lucie Tanguy (1982, 1987, 1994, 1995; partly with co-authors).

5.3 Development of the Methodology in *Comparative Research in VET*

In the stocktaking it was shown why *Comparative Research in VET*, a young science, should seek to establish a link with Comparative Education. In the following chapters the methodological principles were therefore developed with a direct link to Comparative Education. When developing theories of *Comparative Research in VET*, by contrast, the research findings of Comparative Education have been only included in a reticent manner. It seems that many long since settled controversies in Comparative Education and the related social sciences (psychology, sociology, political science) have been taken up again and the scientific discourse about methodological development which began with Julien de Paris (1817) is to be re-enacted but with the constraint that fundamental papers such as those by Julien or Sadler, which gave major trendsetting stimulus to the development of Comparative Education are not available. The situation in theoretical discussion is, therefore, developed using a few typical positions. The fear expressed again and again that some VET-systems did not lend themselves to comparison because they differ so much in their structures from those of other national systems is typical of the misunderstanding that only similar things can be compared[14]. An answer has already been given in this paper. Hence the positions are very different. Georg defends this point of view but, at the same time, refers to the "historical and cultural specificities of the social arrangements of VET and labour organisation" (Georg 1997, p. 163; cf. also Bechtle 1989, pp. 88-90). He substantiates these arguments very impressively when comparing VET in Japan and Germany by referring to the respective industrial culture which imposes limits on any attempt to present a universally understandable VET policy as was done, for example, by the World Bank up to the 1990s (Georg 1997).

Münch provides a counter-argument to the results of Georg. Whereas Georg warns about the creation of artefacts and advocates well-founded studies as the basis for comparison, Münch refers again and again to the "very limited scale of the contribution". He „motivates" – this is his delimitation – with a view to a „closer examination of details and links" and at the same time undertakes a daring „triple comparison" in the form of tables and overviews of the Germany, Japan and the USA. In this respect he uses as the *tertium comperationis* the artefacts of Greinert with a breakdown into operating model, co-operation model and school model. This considerable simplification of the presentation according to Münch should help „to develop a suitable exploratory instrument for a sensible linking of overall views (system variants) and individual aspects" (Münch 1997). We will have to wait and see whether this provocative view of Münch will contribute to increasing the motivation of various players to examine specific aspects of *Comparative Research in VET* .

Whereas in the case of Münch „basic models" are to be found as system variants of VET at the centre of his explicitly formulated comparison interest and he wants to obtain results on this without methodologically substantiated empirical studies, Rothe, when comparing the VET-Systems in France and Germany, chooses the path of a reliable database. He presents the main subjects, describes them briefly, develops on that basis problem areas such as vocational guidance and describes the structures of individual study areas (sub-elements) as a juxtaposition in a kind of synopsis. The facts obtained are impressive, the comparison results by contrast are somewhat limited on the formal level. He offers a „quasi neutral" study which identifies differences, similarities, and common ground and calls on the user to make the comparison himself and to develop assessment and decision making criteria for that purpose. In the 60s and 70s there was considerable controversial debate about the „neutral" theory of comparison within the framework of the positive discussion (Clayton 1992; Noah, Eckstein 1969; Kazamias, Schwartz 1974). In the case of Rothe the paradigms and the cognition-guiding interest of his „neutral" juxtaposition can be guessed. In the summary he advocates in Germany parallel programmes to the dual system in the form of full-time vocational schools.

Besides the approaches which like Rothe (1995) advocate a *neutral total analysis* or those of Greinert and Münch, which don't want to get involved in total analysis, but anticipate basic models, other research scientists focus on functions and theories, which place research in VET at the centre of their *problem approaches* in the full knowledge that total analysis is scarcely possible in a comprehensive form. Of great topicality are e.g. the theories of a link between education and employment, the occupational phenomenon, adjustment of VET-Systems to economic change, funding of VET, contribution of VET-Systems to overcoming structural changes, relationship between initial VET and continuing education and certification problems (Blossfeld 1993, 1994; Deißinger 1994, 1995).

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[14] Cf. chapter 2.1 Comparison as a basic methodological principle in science.

Other comparative analyses go beyond the problem approach. For instance comparative studies on the social control of VET-Systems such as those undertaken by Koch (1997) or a broadly based comparison involving several types of national VET-Systems (Lauterbach 1995/1997) can come close to total analysis.

6. SUGGESTION FOR A METHODOLOGY OF *COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN VET*

Comparative studies in Comparative Education are becoming increasingly important within the framework of the debate on globalisation and increasingly close political alliances. In the field of Community-VET-Policy, the EU has, e.g. by means of the Leonardo Da Vinci programme, provided major stimulus for *Comparative Research in VET.* Besides the „professionals involved so far, many other people (research scientists, politicians, social partners etc.) will also have to enter the field of comparison or are being forced to interpret the results obtained in a critical manner. Caution must be used when applying the results which are drawn not only from quantitative and/or qualitative scientific studies but also from statistical ones. We have demonstrated in various examples how misinterpretations are possible and the norm.

Furthermore, it could be proven that the methodological concepts are often not substantiated in studies on *Comparative Research in VET* and in many cases are purely coincidental. For a number of research scientists the methodological issues were of marginal importance. That is why the results are not free of controversy already because of the missing methodological basis. Critical assessment of research results, in which the methodological concept and the main interest of the comparison have not been revealed, should therefore be initially conducted on this level. It may be the case that a review of the underlying methodological structure will also lead to a review of the study results. In the case of our study which seeks again and again a link to *Comparative Education*, the major importance of the methodological approach could be confirmed for research findings of *Comparative Research in VET* and also in neighbouring disciplines.

The following proposals for the methodological approach have been established not only in our stocktaking of *Comparative Education,* but also in conjunction with the work by Hilker, Robinsohn and Mitter. They also draw on experience which was obtained during comparative studies for the International Handbook of VET (IHBB). We are basing this in particular on the proposals of Hilker (1962) and Robinsohn (1973) which were also examined within this report.[15]

a) Creation of and justification for comparative classifications (system categories, functions and elements) for national studies/individual studies and the comparison, advancement of hypotheses, determination and substantiation of the *tertium comperationis* on two levels: *comparative goal(s)* and *comparative basis*;

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[15] Cf. the proposals of Hilker and Robinsohn of this paper; Mitter 1989, 1992, 1996; Keevers, Adams 1994.

Hilker, Franz: Vergleichende Pädagogik. Eine Einführung in ihre Geschichte/Theorie und Praxis. München: Hueber 1962.

Robinsohn; Saul B.: Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft. In: Braun, Frank; Glowka, Detlef; Thomas, Helga: Erziehung als Wissenschaft. Stuttgart 1973, pp. 315 - 355.

Mitter, Wolfgang: Comparative Education. In: Clark, Burton R. (Hrsg.) inter alia: The Encyclopedia of Higher Education. 3, Oxford inter alia: Pergamon Press 1992, pp. 1788 - 1797.

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Mitter, Wolfgang: Vergleichende Methoden: In: Hierdeis, Helmwart; Hug; Theo (Hrsg.): Taschenbuch der Pädagogik,. Hohengeheren 1996, pp. 641 - 651.

Keevers, J.P.; Adams, D.: Comparative Methodology of Education: In: In: The International encyclopedia of education (2nd ed.) Elsevier Science Ltd.: Oxford/England 1994, pp. 948 - 958.

b) Description, development, links, process and analysis of elements on the system level (basis is normal the nation state);

c) Synoptic parallel analysis of national elements and system levels;

d) Juxtaposition as preparation and basis for the comparison of important classification characteristics (types, categories, models, development trends etc). The importance was documented under (1) and is the determining factor in the establishment of the main areas in the stipulated classification characteristics and in the formulation of the *tertium comperationis*. The comparative studies refer again and again to (2) and (4);

e) Functional comparison of several systems by means of comparative analyses;

f) Identification of special features of individual systems by means of issues being raised across systems (e.g. idiography, evolutionary function, quasi experimental function) by means of comparative study;

g) Grouping of special characteristics to create types and classification of the individual system studies in the relevant types;

h) Comparison of the „national" classification characteristics processed in the juxtaposition; attempt to create categories;

i) Summary of results, megatrends (development trends across systems), hypothesis verification or falsification, theory formation;

j) Examination of theories in reality (e.g. national system, single function, dysfunctionality) action research, policy advice.

These proposals on the methodological procedure in the case of comparative studies cannot include in their overview-like presentation the fundamental methodological problem areas discussed so far such as consideration of the historical dimension, the same development level of „systems", the system issue, the links between culture and system traits etc. They are, however, essential conceptual preconditions in the case of practical comparative research.

Furthermore, reference should be made once again to the „venerable" principle of *Comparative Education* and *Comparative Research in VET* which Barber reminded us of in 1974, namely that the study design for comparative studies can only really be developed by scientists who have extensive system knowledge (Barber 1972, 1974).

7. PROSPECTS

In his analysis of the „state of the art" Stephen Heyneman concentrates on emphasising the discrepancy he has observed between the growing need for political and economic agencies for comparative inquiries and a „gridlock of ideas" (Heyneman 1993, p. 380). He himself decidedly gives his opinion in favour of research policies to be orientated to this need with regard to choice of themes, determination of aims and methodology. This view entails the extension of his range of observation, within which the extra-university „periphery" (e.g. parliamentary committees, bank conferences, meetings of foundation boards, company marketing seminars) increasingly gain weight in relation to the „centre", occupied by the universities. In the narrower sense national governments and administrations as well as the big inter- and supranational institutions, organisations and agencies (EU, Council of Europe, OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank, etc.) are to be included in Heyneman's priority list which, in general, needs to be considered by *Comparative Research in VET* as a stimulating appeal.

Confronted with Heyneman's interpretation of the „state of the art", universities and extra-university research institutes are challenged to break out of the „gridlock of ideas" and to engage in policy-oriented tasks (in the widest meaning of this term) which is already mirrored by a great number of research programmes and projects. This engagement is not only necessitated by their growing dependence on available financial resources, but also by claims raised by the members of the education systems: teachers, trainers and tutors, parents, administrators and, last but not least, pupils, students and trainees. Accepting „external" demands must not mean, of course, neglecting the continuing efforts in the theoretical field to be focused on the re-examination of content and methodology. Besides overcoming theoretical („inner-academic') and pragmatic (economic, financial, political) deficits, *Comparative Research in VET* will continue to be disturbed and restricted by the „unreliability and narrowness of educational statistics" (Heyneman 1993) and, therefore, make its contribution to develop and refine the mechanisms for collecting and analysing educational information.

Beyond the criteria which are immediately related to its „basic strategies", *Comparative Research in VET* must continue to cope with issues concerning its *thematic* range. Besides the „classical" themes which have not become obsolete at all and are to be identified in the system of VET at the secondary level, new areas of research have become more and more relevant, such as further VET with its complex and flexibility-oriented structures, the interdependence between VET with its „general" (liberal) counterpart[16] on the one hand and the employment system on the other, the special interrelation between (non-academic) VET and higher education; furthermore issues concerning attitudes and socialisation processes of youth and adults; finally, interrelations among technology, culture and education and, in particular education and multiculturality, both in view of the challenges caused by growing mobility and migration.

Many of the subjects suggested here are already focal points of current *Comparative Research in VET* within the EU and are extensively dealt with in this *Report on Vocational Training Research and Development in Europe*. This part of the report discussed in great detail the methodological challenges which have to be tackled in comparative studies. If the "dream" of Europe is to become true, then *Comparative Research in VET* has an important task to assume. In this context comparative studies on the functions and areas (problem approach) as suggested for example by the *Study Group on Education and Training* are very important as the basis for the political decisions behind the design of common structure elements between the individual Member States of the EU.

When identifying all these thematic areas, even taking into account their exemplary restriction in this context, comparative researchers have to tackle the following *basic questions*:

- „How do the 'others' identify the problem posed?
- Why are they concerned by this problem (in the given historical situation)?
- How do they try to solve this problem?" (Mitter 1989, p. 1257)

By answering these and further questions comparative education and VET researchers are challenged to contribute to extending and elaborating their field of work (in thematic, methodological and general-theoretical terms) as well as to offer their support to policy-makers and „practitioners" (in the widest meaning).

Thanks to these study results, a series of EU wide structures could be developed which are viewed by individuals as being important for their career development. In the case of the utilitarian comparative studies, one main goal of *Comparative Research in VET* should not be lost sight of. It was already stressed by the fathers of comparative research Jullien de Paris and Michael Sadler (Julien de Paris 1817; Sadler 1900). Whereas Jullien's approach was nomothetic, i.e. the identification of laws, Sadler stressed the special case (idiographic) in his search. Both have contributed to developing further one objective of *Comparative Research in VET*, understanding of what so far were foreign education and VET-Systems. This understanding of the structures in what had been foreign systems prepares the way for the identification of common values between the nations in the common house of Europe.

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[16] In this context the impacts of *illiteracy* (including the attempts at removing it) on vocational education need to be given distinct attention, since this deficiency is not only restricted to developing countries, but, to a growing extent, also concerning „developed" regions.

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TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

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"Crossing borders (one's own, those of others, internal vs. external borders) is a core skill for European citizens"

European Commission / Study Group on Education and Training (1997)
Accomplishing Europe Through Education and Training, pp. 59-60.

1. MOBILITY IN VET: THE ISSUES AT STAKE

The discussion about transnational mobility in a VET context seems all too often to take as its starting point the assumption that it is part and parcel of the discussion about transnational mobility on the labour market in Europe - but this is only one aspect of a complex whole. When we are discussing transnational mobility in a VET context, we are discussing an issue that covers a far wider range and is situated in a complex multidisciplinary field, much of which still remains largely uncharted by documentation and research. Transnational mobility as an integral part of VET is a preparation not just for a life as a migrant worker and (as the quotation above from "Accomplishing Europe through Education and Training" - also - implies) that of a European citizen, but has a much broader scope: it imparts skills and attitudes of value to most aspects of adult and working life. In this paper, we will investigate what the issues are when we are dealing with transnational mobility in VET, try to give an overview of both the empirical data available and the research and development activities that have been conducted in the field and/or related fields. We will draw attention to any lacunae in both whenever these are found to exist and make recommendations for future research and action.

2. TERMINOLOGY

"Mobility in VET" is taken here to mean the transnational mobility of students/apprentices in VET. In this paper we are neither concerned with the mobility of teachers/instructors and other staff at vocational schools or curriculum development units, nor with other aspects of mobility (mobility within national borders, social mobility etc.). The term "student/apprentice" is used to denote any person who is enrolled in a training establishment and who receives vocational education and training. The term "placement" is used throughout the paper to refer to any type of transnational training or work experience involving students/apprentices in VET apart from study tours (i.e. a stay consisting of short visits at various sites for groups of young people and of a maximum duration of 1-2 weeks). The term thus includes both school-based stays and work placements in companies. Vocational education and training (VET) is defined here as all more or less organised forms of initial and continuing and further education and training activities leading to professional qualifications, independent of their venue and location, age of participant, and his level of qualification, but excluding all forms of higher education.

3. LABOUR MARKET MOBILITY IN EUROPE

It seems appropriate to start by taking a look at what is just one of the several aspects that come into play here, namely the issue of transnational labour market mobility in Europe. The advantages of a mobile labour force are, at first sight and from an economic point of view, evident: enterprises will avoid "bottleneck" situations where production is held up through the lack of labour with the right qualifications, and the plight of unemployment can be alleviated if workers are not only restricted to their own Member State in the search for work, but can extend their search to cover all of Europe.

The free movement of labour was a central issue when the EEC was founded in 1957 with the signing of the Treaty of Rome, it being one of the four cornerstones on which the house of Europe was built (the others being the free movement of capital, services and goods). The Treaty talks of "the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers in the Member States as regards employment, remuneration, and other conditions of work and employment" (Article 48). In Articles 49-51, this statement is further substantiated, and the articles make provision for, other than the removal of all "technical" barriers to transnational mobility:

- close collaboration between the national labour market authorities with a view to disseminating information about vacancies and about living and working conditions in general;
- the creation of a programme for the exchange of young workers between the Member States (Article 50) in order to clear away some of the mental barriers to mobility.

It is worthwhile dwelling a little on these three measures, and examining how they have been translated into reality. As for the removal of technical barriers (i.e. difficulties with residence and work permits, social security, taxation etc.) this has been largely accomplished over the years; a fact which must count as one of the major achievements of European integration. In the area of labour market information, a scheme for the systematic exchange of mobility-related labour market information has been set up (EURES - European Employment Service - formerly SEDOC) which contains provisions for the announcement of vacancies, a large database on living and working conditions, and a finely meshed network of "Euro-advisers" - guidance personnel having received special training to deal with all enquiries concerning employment in other Member States. The Young Workers Exchange Programme (as it was known) operated as an independent programme from 1964 to 1992, when it was incorporated in the PETRA programme. As of 1995, it forms part of the LEONARDO DA VINCI-programme, and it can thus look back on over 30 years of uninterrupted, in the course of which many thousand young workers (young people under 27 with qualifications from initial vocational training or corresponding practical experience) have benefited from a work placement in another Member State.

Despite these measures, the actual number of EU citizens working in a Member State other than their own is not very impressive: it is estimated that in 1990 this figure was approximately 2 million, which meant that only one in 500 workers worked abroad. This number includes frontier workers, seasonal workers, those posted abroad by their employer for a limited period of time, in addition to those who have actually settled in another Member State.[1] And it has not increased significantly since then.[2]

There are several explanations as to why not more workers have availed themselves of the possibility for unlimited travel inside the EU in search of employment. Heinz Werner in his paper "Mobility of workers in the European Union" (1996) points out how developments in trade and industry inside the EU[3] as well as the presence of the structural funds by and large have prevented a "prosperity gap" coming about, thus preventing the push-pull factors of traditional migration theory coming into existence and giving rise to migration on a larger scale. A case in point here is the Republic of Ireland, whose present economic boom may well owe something to an infusion of capital from the structural funds amounting to between 4 - 7% of the GNP in the years between the late 70s and the early 90s.[4]

Other determinants can be identified too - e.g. the presence of cultural and linguistic barriers, the still unsolved problems concerning the recognition of qualifications obtained in another Member State and the high unemployment levels in all Member States. Heinz Werner's conclusion is that there is no reason to expect any large scale migratory movements between the current Member States, but he identifies some areas where a limited increase in transnational mobility is likely. One is linked to the globalisation and internationalisation of companies and their deployment of staff in subsidiaries in other countries, where he sees the development of a stratum of "Euro-executives" - a highly qualified, internationally mobile group that is linguistically, technically and culturally flexible. Another is concerned with the border regions in Europe (the "Euro-regions"), where he sees signs of an increase in frontier work, e.g along the Franco-German border.

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[1] From Bahl-Poulsen & Fahle: Transnational placements - impact and potential, p. 21

[2] See EUROSTAT Migration Statistics 1996

[3] Two factors come into play here, according to Heinz Werner: firstly, the removal of barriers to trade inside the EU has led to a situation where each country concentrates on producing the goods for which it has a comparative advantage (i.e. can produce more cheaply). Trade relations will thus induce a division of labour in line with the comparative production advantages between countries, making labour migration unnecessary. Secondly, this situation of free trade and specialisation has not produced any major production displacements as it has assumed the form of intra-industrial trade rather than inter-industrial trade; i.e. given rise to a diversification of products rather than a division of labour with the concomitant losses of production units and unemployment in whole regions or Member States. (Werner p. 7-8)

[4] The Economist, May 17th 1997

Even though H.Werner does not give any concrete figures, there is a simple way of assessing in relative terms the growth in intra-company transnational mobility. If a company decides to post an employee in another EU Member State for a limited period (up to 1 year), the employee will continue to be covered by the social security system of the home country on the basis of the form E 101 (according to EU directive 1408/71 on social security). By looking at the number of E 101-forms completed, it is possible to get a clear picture of this type of mobility. According to the Danish Directorate for Social Security, the figures have developed in the period 1985-96 as follows (figures in 500s):

1985	500
1992	3500
1995	12000
1996	13500[5]

It has not been possible to obtain the similar figures for other Member States, but we may at least take it as an indicator of a clear trend in migration. The growth that there is in transnational mobility mostly affects those with a high level of qualifications and already in employment, and it has no impact on the unemployment situation. Its immediate relevance to our target group - students/apprentices in vocational education and training - is therefore questionable when seen from this perspective, both in terms of absolute and relative numbers.

This situation closely mirrors the situation on a national level in many Member States, where mobility likewise is a prerogative of those who are equipped with the best qualifications. In their book "From PETRA to LEONARDO" (cf. Hertogenbosch 1995) T. Farla and F. Meijers attack the verbiage surrounding the relationship between transnational mobility in VET and on the labour market, refuting its relevance by drawing a parallel to the situation on the national labour market in the Netherlands. "In many documents, the central argument creates a direct link between the disappearance of internal borders within Europe and the mobility of the workforce. Since internal borders are disappearing, it is expected that a single European employment market will come into being, which in turn will lead to increased mobility. This means that a transparent 'European qualification area' must be created, which in its most extreme interpretation would require a standardised European vocational training system. Everyone gets the same vocational training which makes it possible to achieve optimum mobility. The simplicity of this argument may be rather attractive - bearing in mind the existing level of mobility within the Netherlands, which is considered by many policy-makers as being completely inadequate - but it probably does not bear much relation to the facts. Only better educated, better paid employees are prepared to move house within the Netherlands, and most less educated people are not prepared to move at all. Therefore, it seems unrealistic to expect cross-border mobility to be any different. The vast majority of employees will only consider emigrating (either temporarily or otherwise) in cases of extreme need (in particular once they have started a family)." (p. 28)

These conclusions are by no means new and revolutionary and have been taken into account on political level. In the Commission's yearbook "Employment in Europe" for 1993, a short passage on transnational mobility on the labour market ends: "In practice the EC policies are based on the fact that capital movements rather than labour market mobility are the most important instruments for evening out any imbalances. Mobility is seen more as a means to extending the career prospects of the individual regardless of his abode, rather than a regulatory mechanism on the labour market." And it continues: "Thus, there are very convincing arguments against the desirability of a massive migration of labour from the poor to the more affluent regions, not least because of the ensuing loss of income in the former and the extra pressure on the social and physical infrastructure in the latter which would normally be the result."[6]

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[5] Source: Head of section PerDrost, Directorate for Social Security, Denmark

[6] European Commission: Employment in Europe 1993, p. 62. Translated from the Danish version byS.K

We may also draw an illustrative parallel to the Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland) between which all technical barriers to free mobility across borders were already taken down in 1954. In addition, the national labour market authorities entered into close collaboration concerning the announcement of vacancies, and detailed information concerning living and working conditions has been made available to job seekers. Since the mid-80s, these efforts have been backed by the existence of exchange programmes for young people in initial vocational training (Nordplus Junior), young workers (Nordpraktik) and students in higher education (Nordplus) within the framework of the Nordic Council. In other words, an exact parallel to the situation in the EEC/EU. Moreover, the Nordic languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) are mutually intelligible, and there are strong cultural bonds between the countries (which share a long history and for long periods in medieval times were indeed united as one country). Yet despite this closeness the migratory movements between the countries remain negligible.[7]

The situation, then, is one where the free movement of capital and services (the advance of telework will also, to some extent, have an influence here) has to a large extent obviated the need for labour market mobility. The existing mobility arises mostly in connection with multinational companies posting staff abroad e.g. in connection with a relocation, a merger, an acquisition or a joint venture. This trend - not only in the EU, but also worldwide - is confirmed in an OECD report from 1994.

The limited importance of transnational labour market mobility in the past, present and (presumably) also in the immediate future should not detract from its political importance as a symbol of a Europe with no borders not only for capital, goods and services, but also for its citizens. If we continue to maintain that transnational mobility in VET is an important issue, however, and one that yields returns on the investments made in it e.g. through the LEONARDODA VINCI programme, it is in the light of the above conclusions not tenable to refer to it in terms of transnational labour market mobility. This constitutes only one function - and perhaps a minor one at that - of the ensemble. The task, then, is to define the other aspects that together constitute an answer to the question of why it is an important issue.

In the publication "Transnational placements: Impact and potential" which is an assessment of the placement activities in the PETRA programme produced by the European Commission and the PETRA Bureau (the Technical Assistance Office) in Brussels together with a team of experts from the PETRA national coordination units, a section bearing the title "Transnational placements: what's in it for young people" lists a number of reasons for investing in transnational mobility for young people in vocational training. These advantages are, in order of appearance:

- enhancing vocational skills
- developing transversal skills
- increasing intercultural awareness
- improving foreign language skills
- stimulating transnational mobility and promoting young people's future prospects
- enhancing the self-confidence of disadvantaged young people.

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[7] On Jan. 1st 1994, the number of nationals from other Nordic countries resident in Denmark was as follows (absolute figures):

Norway	10,528
Sweden	8,31
Iceland	3,111
Finland	1,922

This number includes all residents, i.e. also those not active on the labour market (children, students, pensioners, accompanying spouses etc.) By way of comparison, the similar figures for nationals of other countries are:

Germany	9,490
UK	11,365
Poland	5,106
USA	4,782
Former Yugoslavia	11,618
Turkey	34,658

(Source: Eurostat Migration Statistics 1996)

It is interesting to note that the issue "stimulating transnational mobility" (what is meant by this is transnational labour market mobility) in comparison with other documents on the issue is heavily downplayed and only appears way down the list. Furthermore, it is not even allowed to stand alone: it is coupled with the argument that a transnational placement will also be an asset to the future career in the *country of origin* (my italics) for the participant. In the Green Paper of the European Commission (1996) "The Obstacles to Transnational Mobility" these issues are repeated in the introduction, and even though we must bear in mind that the paper not only refers to vocational training, but also to transnational mobility in the context of higher education and research, we can nevertheless see the arguments of the PETRA paper more or less closely mirrored here. In summary, we can boil down the arguments for transnational mobility in VET to four points (excluding that of its relevance as a factor in the promotion of labour market mobility, which has already been sufficiently dealt with):

a) transferral of technology and know-how (enhancing vocational skills);

b) development of international qualifications (including foreign language skills);

c) development of transversal skills;

d) importance for disadvantaged persons.

To these four points we may add a fifth, namely the value of transnational experiences in developing a notion of European citizenship (as opposed to a narrow, national(istic) perspective) in the individual participants. As this is a political goal more than an aspect of direct relevance in VET, we will merely mention it here. In the following, the above points will be described in more detail, but before that it is useful to take a look at the empirical background to these statements.

4. MOBILITY IN VET - THE EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Transnational mobility in VET can happen in two ways: either a young person on his own initiative crosses the border to take a full VET course in another Member State, or he spends a period of time abroad at a vocational school or in a work placement as an integral part of his native course. In the first instance, he receives his certification from the host country; in the second, he will receive his certification in his native country. The impetus for mobility in the first situation in most cases comes from the student/apprentice himself ("spontaneous" mobility), whereas the second mostly involves placements organised for the individual or a group of students/apprentices by a placement organiser, in most cases within the framework of a general agreement between vocational schools and with support from the EU mobility programmes (see below on the concept of "free movers" in VET). This situation is in principle similar to what we find in higher education; however with the important difference that the target group is as a rule significantly younger (15-19 which is the age bracket in which most persons start a VET course) and are consequently less able to take the truly momentous decision to go to another country and stay there for a number of years.

Another, equally important difference is that qualifications from higher education as a whole are a lot easier to recognise across borders (e.g. through the ECTS system), and somebody with qualifications from the VET system of another country may find it very hard indeed to go back to his country of origin and obtain the type of work that his training has qualified him for. The number of persons taking their entire VET course abroad is therefore minute. When we talk about mobility in VET, we are therefore in reality only dealing with young people taking part of their VET course in another Member State than their own. The idea of the "free mover" as we know it from higher education (i.e. a person who spontaneously and outside of any institutionalised arrangements goes abroad to do a study period here) is not very widespread in VET, as the difficulties concerning the recognition of periods spent abroad in most cases present an insurmountable barrier for this. Mobility in VET is consequently an activity that primarily takes place in organised projects (i.e. not spontaneous) within EU or national programmes.

Most of the stays consist of placements of a relatively short duration, which means 3-4 weeks (cf. evaluation of PETRA, LEONARDO). The reason for this is mostly to be found in provisions in national legislation pertaining to VET which makes it extremely difficult or even impossible to recognise long-term placements as an integral part of a VET course. At the time of writing, Denmark is the only Member State of the EU that has integrated the possibility of long-term placements abroad as a feature of the VET system. Although there are no statistics to underpin this, it would seem that almost all long-term placements and the major part of short-term (i.e. up to 12 weeks) take place in companies and are recognised as part of an alternance-based course (apprenticeship).

Transnational mobility in VET - despite the fact that it has historic roots dating back to the "travelling journeymen" (fahrende Gesellen) of medieval times - is after all a fairly recent phenomenon. Until VET with the Treaty of Maastricht became a legitimate area of concern for the European Union, next to nothing happened on Community level, and only very little on national level (see below). It is only with the advent of the PETRA and the LINGUA programmes and later the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme that we see any concerted effort in the field. The empirical data on which to build any research thus mainly emanates from these initiatives, and it seems therefore appropriate to give a short description of the structure as well as the key figures for each of these, to be used as a point of reference.

PETRA (1st phase 1987-92; 2nd phase 1992-95):

The PETRA programme consisted in two phases, of which only the second (1992-95) contained a mobility strand. In the programme, mobility was promoted in the shape of grant aid for two distinct target groups, namely

- *action 1a*: young people in the age bracket 15-25 enrolled in initial vocational training, for placements in another Member State of a duration from 3-12 weeks;
- *action 1b*: young workers in the age bracket 18-27, including young unemployed and young people in advanced training programmes building on qualifications from initial vocational training; for work placements in another Member State of a duration between 3-12 months (continuation of the former "Young Workers' Exchange Programme")

The programme in its second phase also contained provisions (*action 3*) for the setting up of working links between national systems for vocational guidance and for the training of guidance counsellors; (partly) with the aim of promoting the exchange of information related to mobility in VET.

The financial support provided by the Community for the activities undertaken within the framework of the PETRA programme amounted to 104.2 MECU for the second phase; half of which was allocated to the strands directly promoting mobility (action 1a & 1b). In its lifetime, the programme supported placement activities involving over 35,000 young people (23556 under action 1a and 13053 under action 1b).

LINGUA (1990-1995):

The objective of the LINGUA programme was to promote quantitative and qualitative improvement in foreign language competence among the Community's citizens. Under *action 4* of the programme, support in the shape of grant aid was given to groups of young people for short transnational placement activities or meetings of a minimum duration of two weeks in order to improve their foreign language ability. Young people in VET could also participate in these projects, but there is no information on the share of them in the total number of participants (117,168).

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1995-1999):

The LEONARDO programme represents the amalgamation and enlargement of a number of hitherto independent programmes in the field of VET and higher education: PETRA, LINGUA, FORCE, COMETT and EUROTECNET. The programme consists of four strands of which the first contains provisions for improving the transnational mobility of students/apprentices in VET:

Strand I: Support for improving vocational training systems and arrangements in participating countries: This strand is aimed at all those involved in the field, and particularly those in charge of training systems. In this strand, grant aid is given for transnational mobility projects involving young people in initial vocational training (I.1.2.a) for short placements (3-12 weeks) and for long placements (3-12 months) and in I.1.2.b for young workers (3-12 months). The programme operates with a target group of young people in the age bracket up to 28.

The programme has a budget of 620 MECU. In its first year of operation (1996), it managed to move 10,925 young people in initial vocational training and 4,700 young workers across national borders.

When we are dealing with transnational mobility in VET, it is first and foremost the experience from these programme activities that we must rely on for our empirical data. This is not very much, and as it is such a relatively new phenomenon, much of the information that we have is at present only available as raw figures concerning the quantitative aspects, as yet unprocessed and uninterpreted in any qualitative context. The programmes mentioned are the ones where the link VET/transnational mobility constitutes the main element. There are, however, further programmes and Community initiatives where transnational mobility in a VET context play an - albeit minor - role. In particular the Social Fund initiatives under the EMPLOYMENT umbrella (YOUTHSTART/EUROFORM, NOW, HORIZON), the ADAPT-initiative, but also Objective 4 under the Social Fund itself. Many other EU-schemes contain a mobility promoting action line (e.g. the research programmes), and also the initiatives promoting cross-border regional development (INTERREG) may be of interest. The experiences harvested here in connection with transnational mobility, however, have never been evaluated independently, as it remains a side issue.

With a LINGUA programme that did not focus on this target group, and the LEONARDO programme as yet hardly over its teething problems, we therefore have to fall back on the PETRA programme for most of our empirical material in connection with this paper. In this context, we have at our disposal, other than the statistical material, an interim and a final evaluation of the placement activities made centrally[8], plus a number of more or less usable national evaluations of the impact of the programme - including the placements - here. In addition, we have two special studies commissioned by the Commission concerning particular aspects of the placement activities: one on legal and administrative barriers to mobility in VET (Kristensen 1994) (later incorporated in the Green Paper on obstacles to mobility) and a study on the problems in connection with recognition/certification of transnational placements (McKerracher 1994). Any long-term evaluation of the effect of a transnational placement on the participant is thus lacking, and we must base at least some of our conclusions on less valid sources (statements of placements organisers and individual participants).

Many interesting parallels may be drawn to the Young Workers' Exchange programme, though, where the target group - albeit by definition outside the VET system - in many instances is similar to what we are dealing with in VET. In some Member States the responsible coordinator for activities under this programme was (and still remains) the national labour market authorities, and here there are many examples of the participants not having been recruited directly "from the street", but taken from a national training programme (e.g. the *escuelas talleres* in Spain) which has thus been given a tangible European dimension. The outcome of these activities is directly comparable to what is happening now in VET in the Leonardo programme. Unfortunately many of the activities have never been properly evaluated.

On a European basis, activities under the Young Workers' Exchange Programme were evaluated qualitatively in 1989 for the Commission by a German consultancy company (IKAB 1989) and again in 1993 by an Irish/Greek consultancy consortium (NICO Education Services Ltd. and ACRONYM 1994). The findings from these two evaluations - both based on questionnaires sent to a representative sample of participants from placement projects 1-2 years prior to the evaluation - have formed the basis for many of the qualitative statements (e.g. on the length of placements) in this paper. Both evaluations suffer from the disadvantage of being based on interviews with participants in recent placement activities. As an indicator of the long-term effect - e.g on transnational mobility on the labour market - we may draw our conclusions from the enthusiastic statements of participants declaring themselves able and willing to look for work in other Member States as a result of their participation in the activity, but we cannot say anything definite in this respect. In order to do this, we would have to follow a representative number of participants over an extended period and see whether this actually happened or not. Such an exercise has still to be carried out.

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[8] *Interim report*: NICO Education Services Ltd. and ACRONYM (1994): A report on young people
Final report: Bahl-Poulsen/Fahle (1995)

Unfortunately, we cannot refer to any other extensive experiences in the field that could give us more definite material or at least corroborate our conclusions. Mobility as such is, of course, no new thing, but the idea of mobility programmes and other types of incentives to promote transnational mobility for workers and people in VET - i.e. with emphasis on the economic, education and training aspects - is something that we only see in connection with the creation of a supra-national structure like the EEC. There are organisations that have been active in the field of youth exchange for a long time, but this has happened primarily for reasons other than those related to the economy and training. Their declared aim is to promote peace and solidarity between the nations of the world rather than the vocational dimension (e.g organisations like AFS/Intercultura, Youth for Understanding etc.).

In a more official setting we have the experience of large and institutionalised organisations like the Carl-Duisberg Gesellschaft in Germany (since 1949) and the Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk/Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse (since 1962), where many exchange activities indeed have taken place in a vocational context, but again with the overriding perspective being one of fostering friendship and collaboration across borders. In these organisations, we may find many interesting experiences concerning the qualitative aspects of transnational placements in a vocational context, for instance concerning the cultural and linguistic preparation of participants, the monitoring of placement activities etc. A substantial body of work on these aspects has also been done in the framework of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, which has also tried to launch a placement scheme similar to the Young Workers' Exchange Programme: the New European Journeymen Network, an initiative by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. Lacking the necessary finances as well as the executive powers of the Commission of the European Union (being an international and not a supranational institution), the impact of these efforts has been limited.

Concomitantly with post-Maastricht Community intervention in the field, we have in the 90s seen a number of interesting developments on the national level where several Member States have taken initiatives to supplement or complement the efforts of the Community programmes; e.g. the Dutch SESAM programme and the Danish PIU programme. Especially the latter contains interesting perspectives, as it in some respects goes beyond the scope of the Leonardo programme. It is, therefore, relevant to include a brief description of this initiative in this paper as it contains experiences of relevance for the later sections of this paper.

The PIU programme was set up in 1992 and consists of two elements: one is an amendment to the national law on VET making it possible for students/apprentices in the alternance-based VET system to take part or all of their mandatory work placement periods in an enterprise in another EU or EFTA-country; the other a funding scheme set up in the framework of the so-called "Employers Reimbursement Scheme for Apprentices and Trainees" (AER) which gives financial aid to all applicants who can meet the criteria for support. In 1996, some 1,000 young persons availed themselves of this opportunity and spent periods ranging from 3 months to 3 years in companies abroad. The total amount of money spent on programme activities was DKK 15 million (approx. 2.1 MECU). To assist the individual participant, vocational schools, enterprises and labour market organisations in this, a centre (the PIU-Centre) has been set up by the social partners at the instigation of the Ministry of Education. The main roles of this centre is - besides practical assistance to the actors in the field - to disseminate information, to coordinate activities, to develop the programme qualitatively and quantitatively, and to be instrumental in the evaluation of results. Since we are only in the second phase of the PETRA programme, however, there are as yet no appraisals of its long-term effects on the participants. The programme is very interesting however, because it is open to all (no upper budget limit and consequently no restriction in terms of number of participants) and because it allows long-term transnational experiences to be formally recognised as an integral part of a national vocational training course.

To conclude on this section, however, we can say that there are at present, because of its novelty, still many issues in relation to transnational mobility in VET that have not been properly evaluated and thus authenticated, especially in relation to the long-term effect of placements and their impact on the subsequent career of the participants.

5. MOBILITY IN VET: IMPACT AND POTENTIAL

In the following section, we will examine the issues raised in section 1 of the paper, trying to give, in the light of the available data and the existing research in the field

a) a definition

b) an assessment of their relevance, and (where necessary)

c) an description of the process of acquisition.

Here, it is taken more or less as an axiom that a learning process in relation to each of the four issues mentioned previously (i.e. the importance of mobility for the transferral of technology and know-how, for the development of international and transversal qualifications, and for disadvantaged persons) does take place in connection with the experience of a transnational placement, but other than a few general comments we will not go deeper into the subject of how this happens. There is, of course, a clear link between the length of a placement and the degree of exposure to the native environment of the host country and the benefits of the stay. Short stays for groups of participants have of course their value, in particular if the participants are well prepared and carefully debriefed afterwards, but in order for any real transfer of skills to take place, the ideal is an individual placement lasting at least 3 months. This realisation is also evident in the evolution of the mobility programmes, where the minimum length of placement activities is gradually being extended.

5.1 Transfer of technology and know-how in placements

In medieval times and up to around the mid-19th century, mobility was indeed an integral feature of VET in that it was quite common in at least Northern Europe for a young person at the end of his apprenticeship to travel widely across Europe for a period of time in order to hone his skills, gather experience and acquire new knowledge and inspiration in his chosen field. In many guilds it was a prerequisite to have travelled if one wanted to set up as a master craftsman, and there were rules laid down as to the length of the period and the distance from home. Here, mobility was clearly a vehicle for the transfer of technology and know-how across borders, and as such of crucial importance for the development of trade and industry.

The transfer issue is of continuing relevance in the discussion on mobility in VET, albeit with a shift in focus: it is no longer in this forum that the exchange of technology and know-how on the macro-level takes place.[9] This happens e.g. through the mobility of researchers and - in an educational context - in the placement activities organised between universities and private enterprise in a COMETT/LEONARDO framework. Instead, the focus is on the individual participant and the infusion of skills that a transnational experience may represent for him. In an evaluation carried out under the PETRA programme in 1994[10] among former participants in action 1a placements, 71% said that they considered the training they had received was good, 71% felt better trained for future jobs, and 72% found the training very useful. For the young workers in action 1b, the corresponding figures were 77, 75 and 73. These figures should, of course, be taken with a pinch of salt as they do not reveal whether they actually cover an acquisition of "hard" (process-dependent) vocational skills, or whether they represent an overall assessment that relates as much (or more) to the overall experience and/or to the "soft" (process-independent or transversal) skills that are dealt with under a separate heading. However, going over individual placement reports we may find many instances where the transfer of technology/know-how is a major motivation. In the Danish PIU-programme (see above) we find instances of apprentice chefs/cooks going to France and Italy to learn about the cuisine there, and of apprentice car mechanics going on a work placement in Germany in the factories where the cars they repair are produced. In both instances they clearly augment and supplement their skills in a way that would not have been possible had they stayed at home. For many students/apprentices in the commercial areas, the outcome in terms of foreign language competency in their field of work and their knowledge of procedures and other legal and administrative issues etc. of the labour market in the host country is of direct relevance to them in their future careers. This experience could not have been obtained to the same extent in their home country.

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[9] The issue, however, is relevant in connection with the placement activities in the framework of the LEONARDO (and formerly the COMETT programme) involving university students and companies dealing with high technology products.

[10] IKAB, p. 8 (short version in English)

There is a general acceptance of the fact that a real transfer in terms of hard skills is not the central element in a placement. Farla and Meijers (1995), to mention one example of this, in their evaluation of the impact on the PETRA programme in the Netherlands clearly see this aspect (i.e. the acquisition of vocational skills) as being a much less important "return" on a placement than the acquisition of transversal skills (pp. 98-103).

5.2 Development of international qualifications (including linguistic skills)

In an age where international trade is increasing, where production processes are split up temporally and spatially, and where mergers, acquisitions, relocations and joint ventures across borders are the order of the day, the ability to act transnationally becomes a key qualification for large parts of the labour force, even though it does not actually move across borders. They must possess what are described as here as "international qualifications". This term is not the only one in circulation: others talk of "Euroqualifications", "European key qualifications", "intercultural skills" etc.; terms that in principle mean the same, even though the authors of the concepts may include slightly different sub-items under their chosen heading.

For the purpose of this paper, we will adopt a very broad definition of "international qualifications" as a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that allow a person to act in an international vocational context.[11] Attempting to precisely define what it takes to act transnationally is an enormous task, as it varies from sector to sector, from company to company, and from position to position. Also the level at which these skills must be mastered varies. Competency in foreign languages is a case in point, where at one end we have the sales manager in an international company who has to conduct complicated negotiations in the language of the prospective buyer, and at the other we find the shopfloor worker, who can get along with no other languages than his own in his entire working life. In between these poles, we have the examples of e.g. the skilled metal worker who must be able to read and understand a manual for a new piece of machinery in a foreign language, and the office worker who must be able to answer the occasional telephone call from clients from other countries.

How relevant are these intercultural qualifications to the labour force in Europe? Again, it varies. In some regions/Member States they are deemed crucial due to the composition of the economy, in others they are seen as less important. The overall need for foreign language competency in German companies, for instance, was estimated according to an investigation made by the Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (Federal Institute for Vocational Training) in 1991/92[12] to concern only 12% of all workers. In Denmark, on the other hand, the relevance is considered so self-evident that language training is compulsory everywhere in mainstream VET (this is not the case in Germany).

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[11] A profound overview of research and development in this highly complex area is found in Busse, Paul-Kohlhoff, Wordelmann (1996)

[12] Quoted in: Busse (1997), p. 7

Taken in its totality, we may divide the international qualifications into three major headings, namely:

a) linguistic competency;

b) intercultural competency;

c) international vocational competency.

The third point - international vocational competency - is concerned with specific vocational skills that are necessary within a given profession in order to act transnationally. This could e.g. be knowledge of legal and administrative practices in countries other than one's own, knowledge of technical norms, the knowledge of a set of specific technical terms (vocabulary) or in general proven excellence in the chosen field.

Whereas foreign language competency and vocational competency is relatively easy to deal with once it is placed in a concrete context, cultural competency is a more diffuse term to work with, and one that is difficult to make operational. What does it actually mean, understanding the mentalities and the cultures of people from other countries? For the purpose of this paper, we will define it as the ability to interact constructively with people of a different cultural background on the basis of a perception of differences and similarities in values and attitudes. M. Meyer[13] has defined three levels of cultural competency where level one (monocultural) is used for the level where the person judges everything by the norms of his own culture, and level three (transcultural) is used for the person who is capable of acting competently in many cultural environments:

Monocultural

The person sees everything and judges everything according to his own cultural norms; the attitude to other cultures is characterised by stereotypes and clichées.

Intercultural

The person can explain cultural differences because of a specific knowledge he has acquired, either through personal experience or from other sources.

Transcultural

The person is able to discern intercultural differences and solve intercultural problems in a balanced way. The person can develop his own identity in the light of an intercultural understanding. The person has an overview of both his own and other cultures, so that he understands and appreciates both.

With Meyer's notion of the transcultural level of cultural competency, we are, in reality already into the next area, namely that of transversal skills.

5.3 Development of transversal skills

Transversal skills - also called core skills, personal skills or process-independent qualifications - are defined against vocational skills - as not being tied to any particular trade, profession, sector or work process but as being applicable to a wide range of situations in private as well as working life. The terms covers many different skills, such as entrepreneurial skills (creativity, risk-taking, responsibility, self-reliance, decision-making skills, the ability to take an initiative), communicative skills (including foreign language proficiency, negotiation skills), interpersonal skills (tolerance, flexibility, conflict-handling, team-building skills) as well as a number of other skills (problem-solving skills, quality awareness, self-confidence, determination, the ability to learn new things and de-learn old ones etc.). These are skills that are becoming increasingly valuable on a labour market which is characterised above all by change, where there is a constant need to adapt to new developments in technology and working methods. Concrete, technical skills become obsolete almost overnight, and huge hierarchies with clear, well-defined positions are being broken down into smaller units with new roles for employees. The Irish Business and Employers' Confederation, in its response to the Commission's Green Paper on Education in March 1993, stated: "Education as a preparation for working life is not the once-and for all proposition that it was. The value of too narrow vocational qualifications is shrinking in the face of technological innovation and rapid changes in working techniques. Consequently, there is an increasing premium on such types of formal education that improve problem-solving skills, enterprise, initiative, creativity, adaptability, and a willingness to undertake further education and training on the job".[14]

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[13] Quoted in: Broe, Kristiansen, Norberg (1995)

A great deal of effort has been made in order to find methods of imparting those skills to young people, and while there are many views on the matter, a general understanding seems to be emerging among educationalists that these competencies cannot be taught in the traditional way, but that it is possible to create frameworks in which they can be learned. A transnational placement has turned out to be a very effective framework for the acquisition of those skills.[15]

During a placement, young people often find themselves left to their own devices as the usual network of friends, colleagues and family are often a thousand kilometres or more away. They have to tap into their own resources or enhance these in order to survive in these new and unknown surroundings. A few examples will show how it works in practice:

Self-confidence and self-reliance - due to the fact that the young person has managed to "survive" in an alien environment, he leaves with an increased belief in himself and his own abilities;

Adaptability and risk-taking - participants must adapt to a new and strange environment. The language, customs and habits all seem different from those at home and the young person must cultivate a flexible attitude and demonstrate a willingness to change or modify former points of view or attitudes. In a new environment, participants may be stimulated to try out something new - something they might never have considered doing under normal circumstances. Making a move and learning from that process helps the young participants to go beyond what they thought was feasible when they were in more familiar situations.

Communication skills - because participants find themselves in another country with another culture, communication skills have to go further than the mere acquisition of a foreign language. Young people gain an insight into the cultural norms that lie behind the language and a realisation that words that are seemingly identical mean different things to different people. In a multicultural society, these are important insights which can contribute to increasing intercultural awareness and to a change in mentality.

Creativity and lateral thinking - participants learn that there are more ways of going about solving a specific problem than the way which is used in their own country or region. In addition, they have to be creative to solve problems in communicating with people who speak a different language or in situations where their usual reactions, gestures and expressions do not have the desired effect.

Initiative - it is often hard for the placement organisers to assess the correct skills level of the participants and to identify a work placement that corresponds to their qualifications. Also, employers are often too busy to spend time finding suitable tasks for participants. Instead of being stuck with undemanding or routine tasks, young people have to take the initiative in negotiating tasks which are more in line with their qualifications and training needs.

This aspect of the learning process in a transnational placement was deemed so important that the German National Coordination Unit for action 1a in the PETRA programme, the Carl Duisberg Gesellschafft, titled their evaluation report for the year 1992-93: "Im Ausland Lernen - Förderung von Kreativität, Eigeninitiative und Verantwortungsgefühl" (Learning abroad - fostering creativity, initiative and responsibility).

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[14] quoted from: Kristen/de Wachter (1995) p. 10

[15] For a more exhaustive argumentation for this, seeKristensen/de Wachter (1995) p. 28-29

5.4 Mobility for disadvantaged persons

In the Council Decision governing the second phase of the PETRA programme, it was stipulated that programme activities must "devote particular attention to young people at risk, including disabled and disadvantaged young people", a concern that is repeated in the LEONARDO programme. The formulation offers the possibility for a very wide interpretation of the target group, as one can be at risk or disadvantaged in many ways (low skills level, coming from less affluent regions, deprived areas, immigrants, delinquency, unemployment or threatened by unemployment, gender, mental and physical handicaps, problems with social integration etc., etc.). However, it falls outside the scope of this paper to discuss the exact definition.

There is, of course, a clear political message in the Council Decision about a social Europe that offers opportunities to all its citizens and not only to those who are in a position to grab and hold them on their own account. Other than that there are two other issues of relevance in this context. One is concerned with the increasing importance of the so-called "international qualifications" on the labour market (see above). If these are not imparted to the disadvantaged or marginalised groups on the labour market, too, they will end up even more disadvantaged and marginalised. The other is linked to the fact that transnational mobility has been and is ongoingly also used as a pedagogical tool in the work with those groups, for most of whom transnational mobility in a labour market context is - and probably forever will be - beyond the borderline of the possible.

The pedagogical advantages of working with transnational experiences with certain groups of disadvantaged persons may be summarised as follows:

a) The fact that they break a barrier that for many has been insurmountable - namely that of going to another country and spending a period of time there in interaction with the local environment - will motivate them to break through other barriers later;

b) Many in this group are tied to an unfortunate image of themselves by the expectations of their surroundings. By leaving behind them the negative influence and pressure of the social environment and entering a space where nobody a priori meets them with negative expactations, they may - with adequate psychological support - manage to take the first steps towards a "redefinition" of themselves.

The issue of transnational experiences and disadvantaged groups has received much more attention in other programmes than those directly concerned with VET and mobility. In this context we may point to HELIOS (physically and mentally handicapped), NOW (women), HORIZON (groups threatened by social exclusion) and YOUTHSTART (young people with no or limited qualifications). The last three are initiatives under the Social Fund. This subject has also been given priority in all three phases of the Youth for Europe Programme.

5.5 Other

Most of these issues are centred around the individual and his personal and vocational development. To them, we may also add another issue that operates on another level: namely that of transnational mobility as a way of raising the status of VET and making it more attractive to young people by offering the possibility of transnational experiences. This theme is central to the Leonardo programme, and is explicitly mentioned as a prioritised objective in the preamble to the programme text.

6. MOBILITY IN VET: THE OBSTACLES

The identification and subsequent deconstruction of obstacles to mobility in VET has been high on the agenda in the EU since the early '90s. In 1993, the Commission commissioned a European-wide study of legal and administrative barriers to the transnational mobility of young people within the framework of the PETRA programme. The study was conducted on two levels: firstly, a team of national experts was set up to elaborate a report on the legal and administrative barriers to mobility in each of the then 12 Member States. Secondly, the Commission appointed

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an expert to write, on the basis of the 12 national reports, a synthesis report (Kristensen) that looked at the problems from a Community perspective and identified the areas where Community intervention was deemed appropriate to help overcome these obstacles. Another study, based on the same principle with a synthesis report being made on the basis of national contributions, was elaborated concerning the problem of recognition/certification (McKerracher 1994) The two studies had the status of "grey papers" - i.e. served as internal papers for the Commission as the basis for a recommendation, and the findings were later (in conjunction with investigations in areas other than VET; e.g. mobility in higher education and for researchers) incorporated in the Green Paper "The obstacles to transnational mobility".

The Green Paper of the European Commission (1996) points to a number of obstacles of a legal and administrative character for transnational mobility where either Community intervention or concerted action on national level can provide a solution. The obstacles listed in the Green Paper that are relevant in a VET context may be divided into two groups: those that make participation in transnational VET activities impossible (legal and administrative barriers), and those that make participation difficult (e.g. lack of recognition, linguistic and cultural barriers etc.). The Green Paper points to five basic obstacles to mobility in education, training and research, four of which are of relevance to mobility in VET:

- the unemployed lose the right to unemployment benefit if they participate in training courses in another Member State exceeding three months;
- statutory problems for trainees and young people doing voluntary work;
- territorial restriction of student grants;
- problems of mutual recognition of academic and vocational qualifications.

In addition to these, the paper mentions a number of other obstacles of a more practical nature, e.g. lack of funding for placement activities, lack of host companies for placements etc.

On the basis of the barriers identified, the paper proposes a number of lines of action to facilitate mobility within education, training and research in Europe. The proposed actions include:

- according specific status to trainees on placements in other Member States;
- ensuring social protection for everyone benefiting from mobility as part of their training;
- creating a European area of qualifications to ensure recognition of placements;
- removing territorial restrictions on grants and national financing;
- improving the situation of nationals of third countries (i.e. non-EU countries) legally resident in the European Union with regard to training;
- reducing the socio-economic obstacles (increase funds for mobility);
- reducing linguistic and cultural obstacles;
- improving the information available and administrative practices.

Some of these action lines are very specific, and are related to the problems for certain groups of availing themselves of the benefits of mobility on a par with everybody else. This is the case for e.g. unemployed persons (who will in some Member States lose their status as unemployed and their rights to unemployment benefit and social protection if they go to another Member State to undergo training) and for nationals of non-EU countries legally resident within the EU. The proposal to confer special status on trainees on placements refers to unremunerated work placements, where the participant in some Member States will encounter problems with e.g. industrial injuries and liability insurance.

Other barriers are much broader, and create obstacles that affect mobility in VET more or less in its totality.

If we concentrate on those barriers that affect most prospective participants in mobility activities, the incompatibility of VET systems remains one of the biggest barriers, just as the problems concerning the recognition of qualifications obtained in other Member States stands in the way of mobility on the labour market. There is an important difference between the two, however. The recognition of qualifications obtained in another Member State in a labour market context (profession recognition) concerns entire courses and is made enormously complicated by the often fundamental differences between the structure and contents of VET in the European Union. In VET, on the contrary, we are dealing with a situation where the student/apprentice only takes part of his course in another Member State (academic recognition), and here it is easier to find common elements where recognition is possible.

Member States with an alternance-based VET system (CEDEFOP 1995) have here an advantage as the training requirements for work placements are broader and more flexible in terms of contents than theoretical courses. In the Danish PIU programme companies abroad are approved as training providers by the accrediting structures in Denmark (the trade committees) according to a procedure where the company is informed about the requirements of the apprentice and subsequently signs a statement to the effect that they will provide the required training. An apprentice may take up to all his mandatory periods of work placements abroad, which means that he can spend from 3 months to 3 years abroad, in one or more companies. During that time, however, the apprentice will have to come home to Denmark for a number of obligatory school periods that may under no circumstances be taken abroad. During these periods, his skill level is assessed in comparison with other apprentices undergoing training in companies at home and any deficits diagnosed. If it is estimated that the training he has received is not of a standard that is compatible with the demands of the curriculum, the company is asked to rectify this, and in the cases where this does not happen, the training period may ultimately not be recognised and the apprentice will have to return to train with a Danish company. Programme coordination and development is assured by the accrediting bodies (trade committees) themselves through a special organisation (the PIU Centre) which has been set up by the social partners and is partly financed by the Ministry of Education.

Denmark is at the time of writing this article the only Member State where such a model exists, as a number of legal and administrative constraints makes it impossible or extremely difficult for apprentices in other Member States to train abroad for any extended period (McKerracher 1994). As there is an obvious connection between the duration of a placement and its long-term positive repercussions, it means that some of the potential value of such activities cannot be exploited fully here.

Another approach is offered by a number of transnational pilot projects in PETRA and LEONARDO where a number of national or regional bodies with responsibility for curriculum development and accreditation (e.g trade committees, Industrie- und Handelskammer, Training and Enterprise Councils etc.) have gathered across borders to develop joint modules for elements of particular training courses, allowing students/apprentices to circulate freely between the participating Member States, albeit only in relation to a specific module of their course. The Commission proposes in its Green Paper the creation of a European qualification area for vocational training along the lines of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The actors in the ECTS system are institutes of higher education all over the EU that have entered into a voluntary agreement to recognise study periods from one institution to the other across borders. To this purpose they exchange information material about their curricula, and every institution appoints an ECTS coordinator to help students organise their study period abroad. Courses of higher education are, however, as a rule a lot more flexible than VET-courses. As a rule, they award their diplomas themselves which most vocational schools do not. Moreover, the structure and contents of higher education courses definitely contain more similarities on a European-wide basis than do VET-courses, where the differences from one Member State to the other can be fundamental.

The lack of information on mobility-related issues is another important obstacle. The Green Paper mentions the need to coordinate information activities, and points to the existence of mobility-related information services and databases like EURES, ORTELIUS, EURODESK, CORDIS, NARIC and EURYDICE. Of these, only EURES and - to a limited extent, since it is open to a restricted number of users only - EURYDICE is useful in a VET-context, the others being dedicated to higher education, research and youth matters. The list is not complete however, and fails to mention some important information tools that are directly useful for mobility in VET. Under the PETRA programme, a number of National Resource Centres was set up to facilitate the exchange of information across borders between guidance and counselling structures in Member States. In connection with this, a European Handbook for Guidance Counsellors was produced containing information on mobility-related issues, and a series of training seminars for guidance counsellors was held. These efforts bear some resemblance to the EURES system for the exchange of similar information on the labour market, albeit on a vastly smaller scale. The activities are continued in the LEONARDO programme, but the resources allocated are not of a size that allows any major initiatives. As mentioned above, individual young people may supplement this service, however, by taking advantage of the information available on living and working conditions in the EURES system.

As an example of a major information activity of relevance in this context we may draw attention to the international organisation, ERYICA (the European Youth Information and Counselling Association) that some years ago with financial support from the Commission's Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth (now DG 22) produced a series of small handbooks (approx. 100 pages) "Guide for Young Visitors to ..." These guidebooks were elaborated by Youth Information structures in a number of European countries (also non-EU) according to a common model, and were written especially for young people intending to go to another country for the purpose of work or education/training. They are obtainable at a small price. Recently these information guides have been reissued with support from the Youth for Europe programme in a CD-ROM version, albeit not for all Member States.

Developments in the information area are happening at a rapidly increasing speed, however - not least due to the new information technologies. Much information is now made available transnationally through e.g. the Internet. In the framework of the LEONARDO/PETRA programme, many projects tackle the issue of information - e.g. by producing preparation material for transnational long-term placements. The problem here is almost the opposite: how to get an overview of all the material that exists and how to evaluate it and assess its relevance in a concrete context.

Given that many transnational activities in VET are placements in companies, the problems connected with finding a company willing and suited to take a student/apprentice from abroad take on enormous importance. In a recent article in *Le Magazine*, a publication issued by DG 22 on education, training and youth[16] Michael Adams from CEDEFOP points to the difficulties of finding work placements for young people on national level as a major obstacle to the advance of alternance-based training. Even in Member States with a long tradition for this (e.g Germany) there are now problems with getting companies to take in the required number of apprentices. These difficulties can be multiplied several times over when we talk about finding placements for young people from other countries. Besides the problems in connection with language and mentality, the prospective placement host in many cases also suffers from a lack of information on the training system of the applicant's country of origin, increasing the margin of insecurity as to what he can actually do and to what extent the employer will have to devote resources to monitoring the trainee and to making sure that his training needs are met. Other than the problems with language, culture, vocational background etc. there is also the danger that these young people from other countries are seen as taking the places that should rightly go to young nationals of that country. For one thing, this will clearly not advance the idea of European citizenship particularly if, of course, the flow of students/apprentices is in one direction only, and there is no matching number of young people in training going the other way. All these difficulties taken together make "marketing" a young trainee from abroad an often extremely difficult task, especially in cases where it is foreseen that he be paid during the placement. That these difficulties are very real is shown by a recent investigation made by the Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk/Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse which followed the fate of a number of young people looking for placements in other countries ("spontaneous" mobility). In the overwhelming majority of cases, the search was fruitless.[17] That it can be done, however, is demonstrated by the Danish PIU programme (see description above) which sends out some 1,000 apprentices from the dual system every year on a purely unilateral basis, mostly to Germany. How these contacts have been made and why the enterprises accept a Danish student/apprentice for an extended period has never been properly analysed, but a closer scrutiny of the motivating factors for employers in all EU Member States could yield much useful knowledge for future strategies on how to find the coveted placements.

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[16] Le Magazine, December 1996

[17] "Untersuchung der beim DFJW eingegangenen Einzelfragen nach Praktika in Frankreich und Deutschland" DFJW Referat III,

The Green Paper recommends that all training should be accompanied by adequate linguistic and cultural preparation and that funding be made available not only for items like travel costs, accommodation and food, but also for related activities like reception, monitoring and evaluation to ensure the best possible chances of success. In this statement there lies a recognition of the fact that transnational mobility taking place in the context of formalised vocational education and training and leading to recognised qualifications consists of more than the mere shifting across borders of a number of students/apprentices. A badly prepared and executed stay may entail a whole range of calamities and often produce the opposite results of those intended: the participant returns with a feeling of defeat that he will forever associate with the host country, prejudices are confirmed instead of dispelled, no extra skills are acquired and quite probably the participant may in many cases have to add extra time to his course in order to catch up, host companies are disappointed and may decide not to accept foreign trainees again etc. etc.

A notion of quality is, therefore, instrumental in the work with transnational placements in a VET context. Quality in this field, however, is not a fixed and unalterable thing. What constitutes good quality in a given placement activity varies according to target group and circumstances, but we can on an overall level identify a number of aspects that any placement activity taking place within the framework of VET - be it on an individual or a group basis - must consider. Besides the practical arrangements, which fall outside the scope of the paper, these are:

- selection of participants;
- preparation of participants (linguistic, cultural, vocational, psychological and practical preparation);
- preparation of host company or institution (training requirements);
- monitoring;
- debriefing of participants;
- evaluation.

Of these, linguistic and cultural preparation in particular has received attention, both in the context of mobility in VET, but also in a labour market context, where many companies offer special preparation courses for staff that is about to be posted abroad. In the framework of the PETRA programme, a special study was undertaken in 1994 (Carpenter, Egloff, Walters 1994), drawing on experiences both from the programme itself and from the LINGUA programme. It also involved expertise from the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The paper offers a very comprehensive overview of the experiences harvested so far, especially in relation to linguistic preparation. It has the advantage of being very operational containing, as it were, direct guidelines for concrete activities for various target groups within VET and references to additional literature on special issues such as VOLL pedagogics (VOLL = vocationally oriented language learning), TELL (technologically enhanced language learning) and the use of untraditional techniques like drama in the work with disadvantaged groups. Since the paper was elaborated, however, a great many initiatives have been taken in the field and much interesting material produced in the framework of the PETRA, LINGUA and LEONARDO programmes. However, the study has not been updated.

As mentioned already, a significant body of research and development work has been going on in recent years concerning the preparation of employees from multinational companies who are to be posted to another country. This reflects the tendency described in the section on labour market mobility, where an increase in mobility for this particular group has been registered.

Bad Honnef 1996.

Much of the work here is concerned with intercultural aspects and is based on the findings of the Dutch sociologist, Geert Hofstede (1991), who in the late '70s conducted a worldwide survey among the employees of a large multinational company (IBM), on the basis of which he set up some operational parameters on which to position cultural differences.

For the other aspects of quality in placements, there is certainly much experience and material to be found in a variety of contexts, but there have been made no attempts to gather, systematize it and disseminate it on a European scale.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND ACTION

In its White Paper (1996) "Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society" the European Commission proposes the creation of an "ERASMUS programme for apprentices", i.e. a scheme whereby young people in alternance-based VET can spend an extended period of time in a placement in another Member State than his own. The proposal is not described in any greater detail, and how far the analogy with the ERASMUS (now part of the SOCRATES) programme can be taken is not evident yet, but the chosen name seems to indicate that it will be long-term placements (i.e. at least 3 months) and that the transnational element must be fully integrated into the national curriculum.

If such a scheme is to succeed in shifting any larger number of young people across borders, there are two major obstacles that will have to be overcome first. One is a practical one and is concerned with the difficulties of finding work placements in other Member States. The other is concerned with the problem of recognition of periods spent in another Member State.

There is no easy, top-down implementable solution to the first problem. It is in all cases the individual employer who omnipotently decides whether he or she wants to accept a foreign student/apprentice in his company or not, and in many cases also the conditions for this. The problems in connection with marketing a foreign student/apprentice (language, culture, insecurity about skills level etc.) have been sufficiently enlarged upon earlier to make it clear that it is tough, uphill work, especially if the organiser is sitting in one Member State trying to make contact with potential host companies in the other. What actually induces a company to accept a student/apprentice from abroad is something that many placement organisers may have as many shrewd opinions of, but we lack, on European level, a study of the reasons that motivate employers to do so - something that can form the basis for a concerted recruitment effort. This was attempted, albeit on a very minor scale, by the European Commission in the framework of the PETRA programme with a small study entitled "The benefits for enterprises participating in action 1b" by Daniela Della Valle (1994).

Another step in the right direction could be to encourage the formation of strategic alliances across borders between placement organisers, so that organisation A uses its network and credibility on national level to find placements for organisation B from another Member State, and vice versa. There are at present a multitude of placement organisers about, operating on local, regional, national or European levels, but their aims are often too different to allow direct collaboration. In the "Young Workers' Exchange Programme" up to 1991, the European Commission operated with a network of *national promoters*, which were appointed or set up exclusively to deal with this particular target group on the basis of the stipulations given in the programme. This system was since abolished as it became too rigid to contain the many new initiatives that sprang up as other actors moved into the field, but there is no doubt that its importance for the development of the programme was vital at the time when very few outside of Commission circles championed the idea of transnational activities for this target group.

If mobility in VET is to expand, the concept of quality assumes an even more central role than now. How can we be sure that a given enterprise can actually deliver the training required for the placement, and - once this has been ascertained - how do we monitor the placement to ensure that it is actually done, and that the student/apprentice is not merely used as cheap labour? It is rarely possible for a placement organiser to visit all foreign enterprises and assess these *in situ*, and there are no ways of sanctioning them if they do not live up to their initial promises in this respect. All that can be done is to blacklist the employer and thus debar him from receiving any more students/apprentices from that particular organiser. The most obvious solution to this problem would be to enlist the aid of the certifying bodies for apprenticeship training in the host country and empower these with the monitoring of placements according to a set of transparent quality criteria, but there are as yet no evident models for this.

The quality issue must also work the other way round, however. How do we ensure that the host company will always receive a motivated and well prepared student/apprentice that can perform the tasks that he is expected to? And that the placement activities are carefully evaluated afterwards to ensure that all mistakes are corrected the next time round? This is also an aspect of the problem of finding work placements, for an employer that has once been disappointed by a student/apprentice may very likely not be prepared to offer any placement opportunities again. It is, therefore, in a placement organiser's best interest to ensure that the students/apprentices have been carefully selected and prepared, but many neglect this due to financial constraints, lack of experience and the absence of guidelines and suitable material especially developed for this purpose on the basis of previous experience.

To ensure that (once a new and ambituous mobility programme has been launched) the desired quantity is matched by the required quality, it is necessary to focus on this issue and make sure that all expertise, examples of good practice and material developed is gathered centrally (both on European and on national level) and made known and available to placement organisers.

The proposal of the Commission to create a "European Qualification Area" is impossible to impose as a top-down decision, and it is up to the certifying bodies in each Member State to change their systems so that transnational placements may become an integral part; both with regard to work placements (in the Member States where the system is alternance-based) and school placements. Given the differences in the systems, this is a difficult task, but saying that it is difficult, however, is not the same as saying that it is impossible. Georg Hanff from Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (Federal Institute for Vocational Training) (which was the National Coordination Unit for the PETRA programme in Germany)[18] has pointed to a number of trends that will gradually make VET contents and practices converge; the most important of which is what he calls the "internationalisation of technology". By this he means the fact that as production processes, standards and practices are harmonised all over Europe, the contents of VET-courses in these fields must needs reflect these changes and thus, for certain elements, approach each other to an extent where a direct and transparent comparison is possible. Georg Hanff points to several examples in the PETRA programme of projects which, taking their point of departure in such convergences, have proceeded on the basis of these to elaborate joint training modules that students/apprentices may take in any of the involved Member States. A case in point in the PETRAnsport project, where the certifying bodies of no less than eight Member States have developed a joint training module concerning the handling of dangerous goods on the basis of an EU-directive covering all Member States. Another example of this, taken from several that operate in a LEONARDO context, is the ELEA-project[19] which covers apprentices in the electronics sector and involves four Member States (United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany and Austria). It aims to develop mutually recognisable modules of training for apprentices that can be taken in any of the four participating Member States, thus making free circulation possible along the lines of the ECTS-system, albeit on a restricted scale.

The CEDEFOP project concerning the comparability of qualifications in VET represents an attempt to establish transparency between whole courses of VET across borders. The conclusion of this project, however, must be that the differences between the systems are so fundamental that it is not possible to do this if the outcome is to be useful in the context of labour market mobility; i.e. be transparent to employers. Sectoral studies aiming to identify joint platforms in VET courses across borders that can be used for the basis for the elaboration of joint modules, however, might yet do for the mobility of VET what the comparability project failed to do for labour market mobility.

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[18] Contribution to Wordelmann (ed.) 1996

[19] Project description available fromMetalindustriens Lærlingeudvalg, Nørre Voldgade 24, DK-1780 København V.

It is clear that mobility in VET cannot be dictated from above, but must grow up from below, given the proper incentives and technical assistance. The bottom-up approach, however, carries with it the risk of efforts being duplicated and much valuable experience being lost.

Transnational mobility in vocational education and training is a fairly recent phenomenon, the study of which combines elements from such diverse fields in pure and applied sciences as sociology, psychology, law, pedagogy, demography, educational research, political sciences, languages, history and geography. Even though there are research and development environments in areas close to it (e.g. in the area of labour market mobility, comparability of qualifications, international qualifications, language training pedagogics in a vocational context etc.), it has not as yet established itself as a proper field for research in its own right. We may here draw a parallel to the field of guidance and counselling, which is an equally diverse field, but one where a professional environment has come into being and where there is a coordination and dissemination of research via the existence of professional societies and journals both on national, European and global levels. Much of the impetus for this, however, comes from the United States and Canada where guidance and counselling long before it happened in Europe had been established as an academic discipline. We cannot hope for any U.S cavalry rescue here, however: transnational mobility in VET is only possible on any large scale in the European Union with the possibilities of free movement that have been developed and institutionalised over the years, the availability of mobility-related information, and infusion of capital from the mobility programmes. It can be seen as an example of the differences in Europe being used as a strength rather than perceived as a weakness. There is therefore a need for a centripetal force, acting as a repository of examples of good practice, research and development activities, evaluating all actions in the field and bringing together the various elements and actors in a constructive atmosphere to ensure that a process of mutual enrichment takes place.

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MIGRANTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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1. APPROACHES TO EXPLAIN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

1.1 Decisions for migration

Analyses of migration decisions have to consider various motives of which economic-based decisions explaining migration are only part (cf. for the following Franz 1996).

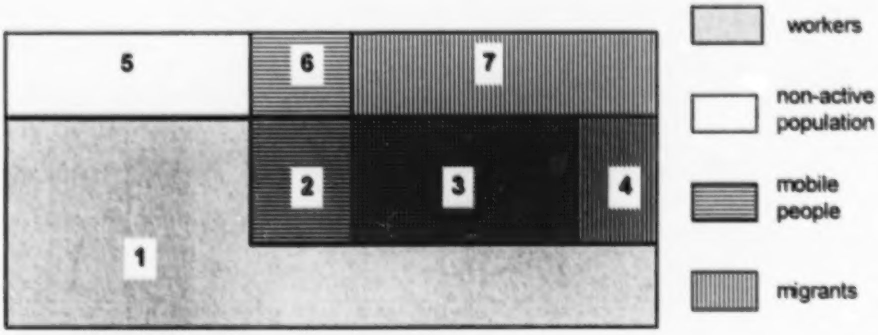
The motives of potential migrants differ, ranging from individual motives to economically and politically-motivated migrations. Migration decisions are often not only the result of individual considerations, but have also to be seen in the family context. Immaterial consequences for other family members (e.g. school problems, loss of the social environment, etc.) and material costs (e.g. costs of information and moving, higher rent, etc.) have to be taken into account as "transaction costs".

An economically-motivated decision to migrate has to distinguish between the economic situation in the home country and in the destination country. In this case, the decision to migrate will be taken if positive earnings differentials, including mobility costs and transaction costs are expected.

A migration can fail - even in the case of free movement of labour as in the EU - because of institutional barriers (cf. Kristensen, in this report), of which, among other things, an insufficient or lacking recognition of certificates could be regarded as one of the main obstacles, besides social or transaction considerations (European Commission 1996).

Figure 1:

Demarcations of mobility and migration



1 = workers living and working in their country of birth
2 = workers living in their home country but working abroad (e.g. frontier workers)
3 = migrants living and working in a foreign country
4 = workers living abroad but working in their home country (frontier mobility)
5 = non-active people living in their country of birth
6 = non-active people staying abroad but who kept their residence in their home country (e.g. students)
7 = non-active migrants living abroad (e.g. family members, pensioners)

It should be noted that "trans-national mobility" is not equal to "migration": "Mobility" refers to all people who work or live in another country than their country of birth, irrespective whether they have changed their residence or not. "Migration" denotes the change of residence, irrespective whether migrants work in that country or not. *Figure 1* illustrates these different constellations. Note that most labour force surveys refer to the residence and the country of birth (or nationality). In combination with the characteristic "employment status" resident and migrant workers can be distinguished. Thus, cases 2 and 4 in figure 1 are not identifiable separately; most labour force data refer to the sum of cases 3 + 4.

1.2 Theoretical approaches

Franz (1996) distinguishes between three main theories to explain migration decisions: human capital and job search theories and gravitation models.

According to the *human capital approach*, the decision to migrate is based on a comparison of alternative costs and benefits of different domiciles. The potential migrant will choose the country where he/she expects the net benefit to be highest. Extensions of the human capital theory consider in particular risk theories. Nevertheless one criticism is that aspects of information provision and processing are dealt with only superficially.

In contrast to the human capital theory, *job search theories* consider mobility decision processes in case of incomplete information and thus also take into account the costs of the provision of information. Mobility[1] (in a broad sense, i.e. between firms, sectors, regions, countries, etc.) is an integral part of the search process. Modifications of the job search theory consider information-theoretic aspects (in the framework of sequential decision theories) and game theories.

A third approach are *gravity models*. They are mainly applied in so-called "spatial interaction models" considering (gross) migration flows in a spatial network. Factors of influence are "push and pull factors" of the regions under consideration, in particular different economic conditions of labour markets, wages, etc. Although these models are capable of explaining some aspects of internal migration (e.g. commuting or shopping behaviour) they neglect decision processes and concentrate more on gross migration instead of net migration flows.

2. EUROPEAN LABOUR MIGRATION: SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this section some findings of the European Labour Force Survey 1995, conducted by Eurostat and carried out by the national Statistical Offices will be presented.[2] The data cover the labour force in all 15 Member States, differentiated by additional characteristics. Some characteristics and data, however, were not available for all countries. Deficits are in particular given for the German data concerning the variable "country of birth"; as an alternative, the variable "nationality" was used for Germany. Out of several characteristics which were included in the analysis, we concentrate on the level of education of migrants, according to the ISCED-classification[3]

2.1 General figures

To gain an overall picture, at first some basic data of the distribution of migrants and residents in EUR 15 will be presented. At first, a comprehensive distribution of residents and migrants - both being workers - by single countries is presented as a matrix in *table 1*.

The rows of the matrix represent migrant workers according to their country of birth, and the columns indicate the national origins of migrant workers.[4] The diagonal consists of domestic workers born[5] *and* living in the same country. Thus, the rows illustrate where migrants have gone to, whereas the columns indicate - for a single country - where they came from.

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[1] It should be noted that the general term "mobility" refers to all kinds of moves from on place/region or status (e.g. occupation, social, workplace within a company, etc.) to another. In this contribution we concentrate on geographical mobility.

[2] The authors would like to thank Eurostat for its valuable support in carrying out the analysis.

[3] International Standard Classification of Education. For a description cf. CEDEFOP 1998 (annex).

[4] The figures refer to workers who have their residence not in their country of birth. Cases, where someone is living in another country than where he/she was born but works in a third country (or his country of birth), are not identifiable by these figures.

[5] Except Germany: the variable "nationality" had to be used.

Table 1: Migrant workers in the European Union - an overview (1 000)

Born in country ↓	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK	Total EU migrants	Total residents and migrants
	Working in country:																
B	**3484.3**	.	9.4	.	5.1	36.0	.	.	5.0	19.5	.	.	.	.	(6.1)	83.9	**3568.2**
DK	.	**2508.9**	10.1	.	.		.	.	(1.0)	.	.	.	.	.	9.2	25.1	**2534.0**
D	25.6	9.5	**32790.8**	18.8	18.0	80.4	.	(5.7)	4.5	49.5	43.3	(3.6)	.	.	114.2	375.2	**33166.0**
EL	5.8	.	205.8	**3669.6**	.	(6.6)	.	.	(0.5)	.	.	.	.	.	(7.5)	230.5	**3900.1**
E	17.4	.	73.8	.	**11762.3**	137.1	.	.	(1.3)	6.6	.	(3.0)	.	.	19.0	261.8	**12024.0**
F	41.3	.	62.2	.	40.2	**19623.6**	.	.	6.5	10.0	5.4	20.2	.	.	37.8	229.8	**19853.4**
IRL	.	.	12.7	.	.	.	**1192.2**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	50.9	69.5	**1261.7**
I	41.4	.	326.5	.	7.3	128.7	.	**19855.4**	5.8	9.2	4.7	.	.	.	47.1	574.8	**20430.2**
L	(3.6)		.	.	.	.	.	.	**100.0**	.	.	.	.	.	0.0	10.5	**110.5**
NL	28.2	(3.5)	62.4	.	.	10.0	.	.	(1.4)	**6277.8**	.	.	.	.	15.9	127.8	**6405.5**
A	.	.	118.1	.	.	(4.1)	.	.	.	(3.5)	**3235.5**	.	.	.	(7.2)	135.1	**3370.7**
P	5.8	.	49.5	.	15.9	412.1	.	.	26.8	(3.2)	.	**4248.8**	.	.	15.8	529.9	**4778.7**
FIN	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**1946.6**	.	(6.4)	11.0	**1957.6**
S	.	8.8	(6.6)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	(3.0)	.	.	**3904.6**	8.9	34.6	**3939.2**
UK	10.1	7.9	63.4	(3.9)	10.2	36.8	50.9	.	1.7	23.9	4.6	.	.	.	**24114.5**	214.9	**24329.4**
																Total residents and EU migrants in the European Union:	**141629.2**
Total EU-migrants	181.9	37.4	1002.4	29.8	102.2	860.3	57.1	14.7	54.9	130.8	66.8	29.7	.	.	345.9	**2914.2**	-
Non-EU migrants	126.4	54.4	1988.8	121.1	163.0	1572.8	12.7	73.3	6.8	370.8	372.2	138.3	68.7	229.7	1273.8	-	**6572.7**
labour force	**3792.6**	**2600.7**	**35782.0**	**3820.5**	**12027.4**	**22056.6**	**1262.0**	**19943.4**	**161.6**	**6779.3**	**3674.5**	**4416.8**	**2015.7**	**4134.3**	**25734.3**	-	**148201.8**

. : data not available or too small sample size - ( ) low statistical representativity due to small figures - slight differences by rounding

note: the diagonal represents domestic workers born in the country (or have its nationality (case of Germany)

Source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

The EU labour force consists in 148.20 million people, the overwhelming majority (138.72 million or 94%) of them working in their country of birth. Out of the 9.49 million working elsewhere, 2.91 million (less than 2.0% of the total EU labour force) were born in a country of the (present) EU, whereas more than double, 6.57 million (4.4%) were born outside the EU.

This tends to confirm the statement of Werner (1996) that the push-pull factors of international mobility within the EU play an increasingly minor role in explaining migration. In particular, it can be assumed that the structural funds of the EU have resulted in a decreasing "prosperity gap" between different EU regions; earnings differentials seem to be not as high as to outweigh the transaction costs connected with a move of the family. *Table 2* summarises these results for the whole of the European Union.

Table 2:

Labour force and migrants, EUR 15 (1995)

	1 000	%
Residents	138714.9	93.6
EU migrants	2914.2	2.0
Non-EU migrants	6572.7	4.4
Total migrants	9486.9	6.4
Total labour force	148201.8	100.0

source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

2.2 Immigration in the EU Member States

Looking at single Member States, it becomes obvious that Luxembourg (38%), Austria (12%) and France (11%) have the highest shares of immigrants. The lowest shares are found in Italy (0.5%), Spain (2.2%) and Finland (3.4%).

The majority of immigrants in Luxembourg (34%) were born in the EU - presumably most of them are working at EU institutions or are indirectly related to these (e.g. in personal services). The same is true, although to a smaller scale, for Belgium (here, also, presumably because of work in EU institutions) and Ireland. On the other hand, immigrants from non-EU countries prevail in France (7.1%) and in Austria (10.1%) as well as in most other EU countries. *Table 3* illustrates the distribution of EU and non-EU immigrants by single Member States.

Table 3:

Labour force and migrants by EU countries 1995

	total labour force (1000)	out of which (%):		
		nationals	EU migrants	non-EU migrants
B	3792.6	91.9	4.8	3.3
DK	2600.7	96.5	1.4	2.1
D	35782.0	91.6	2.8	5.6
EL	3820.5	96.1	0.8	3.2
E	12027.4	97.8	0.8	1.4
F	22056.6	89.0	3.9	7.1
IRL	1262.0	94.5	4.5	1.0
I	19943.4	99.6	0.1	0.4
L	161.6	61.9	34.0	4.2
NL	6779.3	92.6	1.9	5.5
A	3674.5	88.1	1.8	10.1
P	4416.8	96.2	0.7	3.1
FIN	2015.7	96.6	.	3.4
S	4134.3	94.4	.	5.6
UK	25734.3	93.7	1.3	4.9

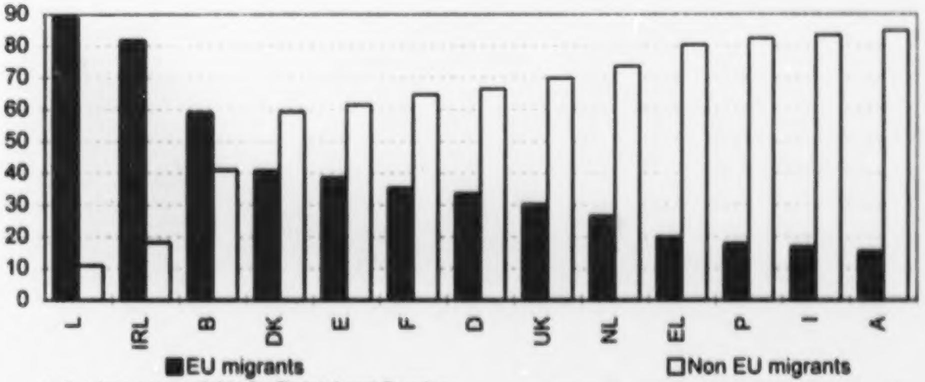
. = no data available

source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

In Luxembourg, 34% of the labour force immigrated from an other EU Member State; further 4% are non-EU immigrants. Similarly, in Belgium and Ireland migrant workers come mainly from EU countries. In the other Member States, the share of EU migrants in the labour force falls below the share of non-EU migrants. These are the highest in Austria, where more than 10% of the labour force consists in immigrants from non-EU countries. *Figure 2* shows the proportion of EU and non-EU migrants by country.

Figure 2:

Proportion of EU and non-EU migrants in the labour force of EU Member States (%)



note: data not available for Finland and Sweden

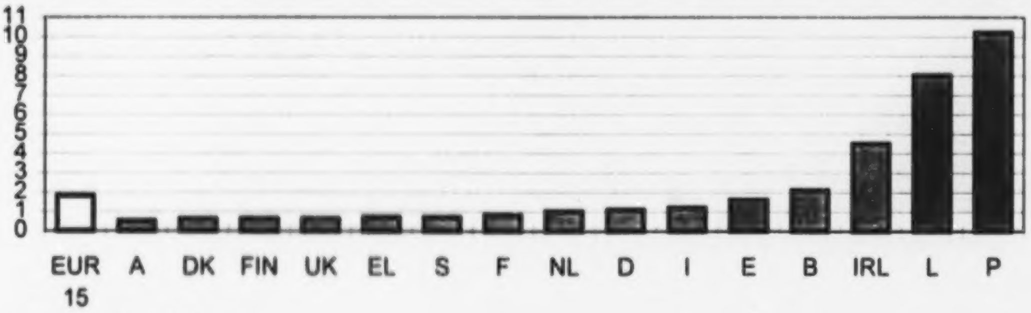
source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

2.3 Working outside the country of birth

Some 1.8 % of the EU labour force work outside its country of birth in another EU Member State *(figure 3)*. Looking also at *table 1* above, Portuguese are most mobile: 10% of the Portuguese "potential" labour force[6] work and live in another EU country, mainly in France (86%). The labour force survey reveals further that a majority of these have been working in this country for more than 10 years. Around 8% of people born in Luxembourg work in another Member State, mainly in Belgium (41%). The Irish also belong to those countries with relatively large numbers of emigrants: 4.5% work abroad, most of them in the UK.

Figure 3:

People born in an EU Member State and working in an other EU Member State (%)



no data available for Germany

note: the percentages represent the proportion of people born in a certain country and working in an other EU country. The number of people working abroad is divided by the total labour force of the respective country of birth + emigrants ("potential labour force")

source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

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[6] National labour force + emigrants born in the country.

A majority of Belgian migrants work in France (48%) and The Netherlands (26%). Spanish migrants work above all in France (72%), similarly Italians (52%) and Dutch workers primarily migrated to Belgium (43%) and the UK (25%).

3. LEVEL OF EDUCATION

3.1 Education of EU migrants and nationals

Table 4 illustrates the educational level (according to ISCED[7]) of emigrants, i.e. those people who were born in an other EU country than the country they are working. The figures are aggregated for the whole EU.

The level of education of Belgian, Danish, German, Luxembourg, Dutch and British people working abroad inside the EU is generally high or intermediate. The percentages of less educated migrants of these nationalities vary between 20% for the UK and 31% for The Netherlands.

Table 4:

Level of education of EU migrants by country of birth (%)

Country of birth	Level of education		
	High (ISCED 5-7)	**Medium** (ISCED 3)	**Low** (ISCED 0-2)
B	40.5	36.2	23.4
DK	30.8	41.7	27.5
D	30.7	42.5	26.5
EL	33.9	32.6	33.4
E	13.9	33.1	52.9
F	22.4	27.6	50.0
IRL	24.2	29.5	56.0
I	13.3	32.2	54.5
L	45.7	26.8	27.5
NL	41.4	27.4	31.2
A	25.4	50.2	24.4
P	3.3	18.9	77.8
FIN	(36.5)	(26.5)	37.0
S	38.5	26.5	35.0
UK	44.7	35.0	20.0

note: High level of education: more than upper secondary school; medium level: upper secondary school; low level: equivalent or less than secondary school
"no answers" are not included in the figures
source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

Spanish, French, Irish, Italian and Portuguese people working abroad in the EU have on the average a lower level of education than migrants from the countries mentioned above. The percentages of less educated migrants (ISCED 0-2) vary between 50% (French) and 78% (Portuguese). The three levels of education of Greek, Finnish and Swedish emigrants working in the EU are more or less equally distributed.

These findings will be completed by a comparison of the educational levels of domestic workers and immigrants. *Table 5* shows the educational level of the labour force in the "working countries", differentiated by nationals and EU migrants. Non-EU migrants are not included.

It seems that EU Member States are facing two different kinds of immigration. To the first cluster of countries belong those where EU migrant workers are on the whole better educated than the domestic labour force. This is the case in Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal; similar is true in

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[7] For a short description of ISCED-levels cf. Annex. For a more detailed description cf. CEDEFOP (1998, Annex).

Denmark, Ireland and Austria. Within the second set of countries domestic workers are on average better educated than EU immigrants. This applies to Germany, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and the UK. In Belgium, no significant differences between the level of education of EU immigrants and domestic workers are found.

These figures, however, are not uniform when the different types of educational levels are considered.

- In Denmark, Greece, Spain and Ireland, the proportion of immigrants with a *high level of qualification* is significantly higher than that of nationals. In Italy and Austria immigrants with a high level of education exceed the proportion of nationals by as much as four times. The reverse is true in Germany, France and the UK, where the proportion of EU immigrants with a high level of education is lower than for nationals.
- In Portugal, the proportion of *medium qualifications* (upper secondary graduates) is more than twice as high among migrants than among nationals; to a lesser degree this applies also to Greece and Spain.

  In Denmark, Germany, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria and the UK, the proportion of immigrants with a medium level of education is less than for the nationals.
- The proportions of *less educated immigrants* in Germany, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and the UK is higher than the share of low qualified nationals in these countries. The reverse is true for Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Austria and Portugal.

Table 5:

Level of education: percentage of migrants compared to nationals in the EU Member States 1995

country of work		Level of education		
		High	Medium	Low
B	National labour force	29.9	37.8	32.3
	EU migrants	27.9	33.5	38.6
DK	National labour force	25.6	54.2	20.2
	EU migrants	44.8	39.9	15.3
D	National labour force	24.3	59.3	12.9
	EU migrants	16.6	41.3	38.0
EL	National labour force	16.6	30.2	53.2
	EU migrants	26.1	53.6	20.3
E	National labour force	21.0	16.1	63.0
	EU migrants	31.3	21.9	46.8
F	National labour force	21.4	47.7	30.9
	EU migrants	15.1	27.7	57.1
IRL	National labour force	25.0	33.0	41.9
	EU migrants	41.6	29.3	28.9
I	National labour force	10.2	34.5	55.3
	EU migrants	(40.8)	(33.5)	(25.6)
L	National labour force	18.8	37.8	43.4
	EU migrants	18.7	18.7	62.6
NL	National labour force	23.1	60.1	16.4
	EU migrants	26.5	53.0	19.2
A	National labour force	8.4	67.5	24.0
	EU migrants	28.2	57.2	14.6
P	National labour force	12.1	11.4	76.5
	EU migrants	(11.2)	28.9	59.9
FIN	National labour force	24.6	48.0	27.4
	EU migrants	.	.	.
S	National labour force	27.7	47.9	24.4
	EU migrants	.	.	.
UK	National labour force	23.2	34.7	41.9
	EU migrants	21.6	22.3	55.9

levels of education: cf. table 4

. = no figures available

( ) sample size too small

Source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

In order to give a more illustrative comparison of the qualification levels of nationals and EU immigrants, the percentage shares of people with lower, medium and higher qualifications have been weighted by average years of schooling and training. Since it was not possible to calculate individual years of schooling for every single country and education or training route, and, in addition, to make distinctions between older and younger generations, we made the following assumptions for *all* countries:

- *"low educational level"*: 9 years (compulsory schooling, average: 8 years + 1 year practical training);
- *"medium educational level"*: 12 years (8 years compulsory schooling + 4 years continuing general education or vocational training and further training);
- *"high educational level"*: 15 years (11 years compulsory + continuing schooling + 4 years higher education and post graduate studies).

These weighted educational levels do *not*, of course, give any information on the *quality* of training, but are merely rough quantitative indices. The results are shown in *table 6*:

Table 6:

Educational levels of residents and EU migrants 1995
(Indices of average education and training levels, weighted by school years)

country	Index for educational level	
	Domestic labour force	EU migrants
B	1192.8	1168.0
DK	1216.2	1288.6
D	1192.2	1086.6
EL	1090.4	1217.4
E	1074.0	1153.5
F	1171.6	1073.9
IRL	1147.1	1235.3
I	1064.6	1245.6
L	1126.2	1068.2
NL	1214.1	1206.2
A	1153.1	1240.7
P	1006.5	1053.9
FIN	1191.6	1200.0
S	1209.3	0.0
UK	1140.8	1094.8

For the calculation of the index cf. text.
source: own calculations based on Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

The score of EU migrants is lower in six out of 14 countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and, to a lesser degree in the UK). This means that in these countries the national labour force is on the whole - measured by average school and training duration - better educated than the EU migrant labour force. Significantly higher levels of education for EU migrants than for residents are found in Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Austria.

3.2 Educational levels of EU and non-EU migrants

The comparison of the educational levels of EU and non-EU migrants *(table 7)* shows in general that the level of education of EU immigrants is higher than that of non-EU immigrants in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands and Austria; and lower in Spain, France and Portugal.

The reverse situation (non-EU immigrants have higher educational levels than EU-immigrants) applies to Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, Portugal and the UK. The proportion of people with a medium level is higher among non-EU migrants in Spain, France, Luxembourg and Portugal.

Concerning immigrants with lower educational levels, non-EU immigrants in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands and Austria are on the average less qualified than EU immigrants.

Table 5-7:

Migrants by level of education, EUR15
- comparison between EU and non-EU migrants (%)

country of work	migrants	level of education		
		High	Medium	Low
B	EU	27.9	33.5	38.6
	non-EU	33.2	28.2	38.6
DK	EU	44.8	39.9	15.3
	non-EU	37.6	38.5	24.0
D	EU	16.6	41.3	38.0
	non-EU	10.9	40.3	42.6
EL	EU	26.1	53.6	20.3
	non-EU	22.0	38.4	39.6
E	EU	31.3	21.9	46.8
	non-EU	35.3	25.7	39.0
F	EU	15.1	27.7	57.1
	non-EU	25.2	32.26	42.5
IRL	EU	41.6	29.3	28.9
	non-EU	59.2	(26.1)	.
I	EU	(40.8)	(33.5)	(25.6)
	non-EU	20.3	22.5	57.2
L	EU	18.71	18.7	62.6
	non-EU	(18.5)	29.3	52.2
NL	EU	26.5	53.0	19.2
	non-EU	20.4	47.7	30.9
A	EU	28.2	57.2	14.6
	non-EU	7.6	41.2	51.3
P	EU	(11.2)	28.9	59.9
	non-EU	37.7	32.2	30.1
FIN	EU	.	.	.
	non-EU	.	.	.
S	EU	.	.	.
	non-EU	35.0	42.6	21.7
UK	EU	21.6	22.3	55.9
	non-EU	29.9	19.5	50.3

levels of education:
cf. table 4
. = too small sample size
figures without "education not stated"
source: Eurostat: Labour Force Survey 1995

4. WILLINGNESS TO WORK IN OTHER EU MEMBER STATES

The willingness to work in another European Member State was one of the questions asked for in the *ad hoc* labour force survey in 1994 (European Commission 1995; Hoffmann 1995).

The results show that a considerable number of people is willing to work abroad; this is the more surprising when looking at the factual mobility within the EU (cf. chapter 2). In total, 44% of the Europeans are willing to work in an other EU Member State *(table 8)*. The willingness to work abroad was the highest (50% or more) in the UK, Portugal, Denmark and France. On the other hand, less than around one third of German, Greek and Belgian people were inclined to work elsewhere.

Younger people have a higher inclination to work in another EU Member State: 54% of the age groups younger than 30 years were willing to do so; 45% out of the age group 30 to 49 years and out of persons older than 50 years only 30% were inclined to work abroad.

Table 8:

Willingness to work in another EU country by different characteristics (%)

	total	male	female	younger[1]	middle age[2]	older[3]
EUR	**44**	51	37	54	45	30
B	**34**	36	31	43	32	23
DK	**52**	60	44	71	49	35
D	**31**	34	21	39	27	15
EL	**28**	32	30	36	33	16
E	**48**	53	40	53	47	37
F	**50**	56	42	58	50	30
IRL	**41**	48	33	58	34	30
I	**49**	54	44	58	56	39
NL	**45**	55	34	60	42	36
P	**56**	62	47	65	57	30
UK	**57**	66	45	67	56	39

[1] up to 30 years old - [2] aged between 30 and 49 - [3] aged 49 upwards
EUR12 without Luxembourg
source: European Commission 1995 (ad hoc Labour Force Survey 1994)

It can be assumed that the transaction costs are lower for younger people and - being at the beginning of their working life - they expect new experiences which may be useful for their career. This is on the whole confirmed when analysing the reasons for not working in an other EU Member State *(table 9)*.

- The main obstacle to mobility is the fact that people do not want to *move* abroad, i.e. to change their domicile. Two thirds of men and women agreed with this statement. This can be seen in connection with the willingness to *work* abroad (table 8 above) where women are considerably less willing to *work* abroad (37%) than men (51%).
- Furthermore, for 30% (men: 28%, women: 33%) commuting is not possible. These two obstacles are interdependent: to work abroad without moving there often fails because of lacking commuting possibilities.

Table 9:

Obstacles to mobility, EUR 12 (%)

Obstacles asked for	total	male	female	younger[1]	middle age[2]	older[3]
Commuting not possible	30	28	33	27	31	31
Do not want to move abroad	67	67	68	69	68	64
language barrier	32	32	32	31	32	32
Cultural barrier	18	19	16	15	17	20
Income and career prospects unattractive	17	18	15	16	16	17
Others	20	20	20	16	18	27

[1] up to 30 years old - [2] aged between 30 and 49 - [3] aged 49 upwards
figures without Luxembourg
source: European Commission 1995

- It is worth noting that only 15%-18% of male and female, younger and older workers stated that income and career abroad was *un*attractive and would thus be an obstacle; in reverse, this could be interpreted in the way that more than 80% of the European workers would potentially move because of labour market/financial reasons. However, the transaction costs, which were not asked for, might have been considered as too high.
- It should also be noted that language barriers were not of the highest order: 32% of males and females in the sample had such problems.
- Cultural barriers are near to no obstacle any more. This obstacle was agreed by less than 20% of all workers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The scale of labour force mobility across the EU is relatively limited. In 1995 less than 2% of the European labour force lived in a EU country different from their country of birth. An analysis of the EU Labour Force Survey 1995 reveals that, on the whole, the qualifications of mobile workers do not differ to any major extent from those of non-mobile workers although there are some country-specific differences.

The main reasons for the low mobility of the labour force might be a growing harmonisation of the standard of living in the EU. High transaction costs and family-related problems are further reasons for immobility which often are considered to impede the economic goal of better regional and occupational allocation of labour (European Social Fund 1996).

The ad hoc survey by the European Commission in 1994 has shown that 44% of Europeans, mainly younger people and men, are indeed prepared to work abroad. Cultural and language problems play only a subordinate role here. In addition, only a minority felt that income and career prospects were unattractive in an other EU Member State. The major obstacle was, however, that most workers were not willing to move abroad. This can be interpreted an indirect reference to high transaction and social costs.

Some forms of mobility do seem to be increasing, however, although there is a major information gap in this respect: mobility on the internal labour market of international companies and frontier mobility in border regions. Given the impending accession of applicant states, improvements to the information base and analyses of the costs and benefits of mobility are urgently needed in respect of the political measures to be taken.

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ANNEX: ISCED-LEVELS OF EDUCATION

ISCED 0:	pre-primary education Education preceding primary education. In the vast majority of cases, it is not compulsory.
ISCED 1:	primary education Begins between ages of four and seven, is compulsory in all cases and lasts five or six years as a rule.
ISCED 2:	lower secondary education Compulsory schooling in all European countries. The end of this level corresponds often to the end of full-time compulsory school.
ISCED 3:	upper secondary education Begins around the age of 14 or 15 and refers to either general, technical or vocational education. It may bead to the standard required for admission to higher education or it may be "terminal", as is sometimes the case with vocational education and training.
ISCED 4:	vacant
ISCED 5, 6, 7:	higher education ISCED 5 covers programmes which generally do not lead to the awarding of an university degree or equivalent, but admission to this level usually requires the successful completion of a programme at the upper secondary level. ISCED 6 covers programmes leading to a first university degree or equivalent. ISCED 7 covers programmes leading to a second, post graduate university degree.

RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATES AND TRANSPARENCY OF SKILLS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Burkart Sellin (CEDEFOP)

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1. INTRODUCTION

This contribution is describing chronologically the attempts of the European Union to make progress towards a common vocational training policy, the approximation of educational and training standards in order to support free movement of labor, which includes a common vocational training policy, as well as the development of a free European space for services, two of the main pillars of the EU.

Since progress in this matter at the political level has been rather limited, this will be an attempt to describe the situation from the viewpoint of someone who has been professionally committed to the subject for more than 20 years. An understanding of the historical build-up leading to the current deadlock threatening on all sides can perhaps be of use to avert such a stalemate if the correct conclusions are drawn from the experience, successes and failures sustained to date. For this reason, the author[1] will start by attempting to take sober stock of the situation and proceed to make a few recommendations for the work to come.

The whole issue has been and still is marked by a high degree of investment into research and development, investigations and pilot projects in order to back up and assist the policy makers, social actors and practitioners on all relevant levels of intervention: European, national, regional/sector and local level.

In the light of the changing competencies and approaches of the Communityand the European Union concerning education and training we can distinguish threemain stages in the development of this issue, which is crucial for the social and economic cohesion of the EU altogether:

a) the harmonization stage;

b) the approximation of training levels' stage;

c) the stage of convergence

2. HARMONIZATION STAGE FROM 1957 TO 1973

The Treaty founding the EEC with its initial six Member States in 1957 (from 1973 onwards nine Member States, nowadays 12 Member States) included vocational training policy among the areas to be harmonized both legally and de facto. It was assumed that the systems were to be brought closely into line with each other, should be made not only comparable but should rather be merged in order to permit a quasi mechanic mutual recognition of qualifications, diplomas and vocational certificates. Vocational training policy in the Community was considered an important and integral part of the political will to approximate living and working standards throughout the Community. An expression of this intention was the adoption of the "general principles for vocational training" laid down by the Council of the EEC in 1963 [2]. These principles shaped the approaches pursued up until the mid-1970s and were in force till the Treaty on the European Union has been ratified. Most of these principles, such as teaching all young people vocational training qualifications before they finish their (compulsory) schooling, have been put no more than partially into effect in the mean-time.

Concurrently to this, up until the mid-1970s recognition of vocational qualifications was pushed ahead as one way of facilitating the full mobility and right of the self-employed and members of the liberal professions in particular to establish a business on the basis of Article 51 of the Treaties. Approximately 15 directives, pertaining especially to health occupations, had been adopted by 1974: doctors, pharmacists, nursing occupations, etc. and architects. The drafting of these directives at that time presupposed setting common minimum standards on the length and contents of training, a process accompanied by lengthy negotiations. For example, more than eight years' work went into the directive on architects[3]. These directives are still valid today. Some of them have been updated in the mean time, they all are still in force. In addition a number of transitional directives have been approved which in the mean-time have been replaced by definitive ones permitting the delivery of services throughout the Community for instance in hairdressing[4].

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[1] The author is actually responsible within CEDEFOP for projects on qualifications' trends and transparency

[2] Council decision of 2 April 1963 laying down general principles for the implementation of a common vocational training policy, published in OJEC No. L 63/338 on 20.04.1963

The establishment of the European Social Fund and later the European Regional Fund, the European Communities' main interventionist mechanisms, which ought to promote the approximation of living and working standards throughout Europe, had an import impact on the training policy in some Member States already at this stage. The former in particular allocated quite substantial resources to disadvantaged regions of the EEC, especially to build up and extend their vocational training systems and to combat their prevailing unemployment. Approximately 80% of the money of the Social Fund went towards the retraining, late training and continuing training of the unemployed or those in danger of becoming unemployed. Initially these funds played only a minor role in building up and extending initial vocational training. This changed towards the end of the 1970s and even more in recent times when the criteria were modified to include support for Member States to build up and extend their full-time and part-time school and non-school initial vocational training systems. It is only very recently that the Social Fund has begun to take an active interest in the development of common standards. Some of the so-called Community initiatives did promote new standards especially in the framework of the continuing education and training of adults.

Some segments of the initial education and training in quite a number of Member States have been developed in line with debates on the European level: For instance the former 'Höhere Fachschulen' including the Ingenieurschulen have been upgraded in the early 70's in order to include these into the Higher education level as so-called 'Fachhochschulen'. The German student movement has been pushing the authorities to do so, because they did fear a downgrading of their qualifications by comparison to French schools for engineering education/training. Parallel developments have been taken place in The Netherlands and in Belgium. Later-on in the UK quite a number of former colleges have been upgraded too in order to get polytechnics which were permitted to teach for university degrees.

The organizations of the social partners and professional associations played a vital role from the outset in accompanying the EEC on its path to develop a common vocational training policy especially on the sub-university level. They were called upon to participate as equal partners alongside government representatives in the various consultative committees with the Commission in Brussels. Because of the consensus principle, which did not permit majority decisions, the competent authorities nevertheless did often block each other and could only reach agreement on a rather low common denominator. This only changed in the second half of the eighties after the Single European Market agenda was passed and the Single European Act and the Social Charter were adopted (see below).

In retrospect we can say that hardly any common EEC vocational training policy could be implemented during this phase. The general principles of 1963 had scarcely any impact on bringing the systems much closer with each other, despite of some trends into this direction. However, the discussions that took place and the resultant directives on the recognition of academic and/or training qualifications of professionals and liberal occupations and, to a certain extent in a limited number of Member States, the interventions of the European Social Fund left a stronger mark, promoting a certain approximation of the education and training systems.

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[3] Council Directive 85/384/EEC on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in architecture, including measures to facilitate effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services, in OJEC No. L223 of 21 August 1985

[4] OJEC No. L 218 of 27 July 1982

3. APPROXIMATION OF TRAINING LEVELS. STAGE FROM 1974 TO THE END OF THE 1980S

Since the EEC was not responsible in the narrow sense for educational policy, but educational policy was a top priority issue in virtually every Member State during this phase, there was keen interest to find a way to be active in this area too while complementing the prevailing economic and social policy priorities in respect of a common vocational training policy. Despite the lacking legal basis for a common education policy loopholes were found so that Ministers of Education and education ministry officials from all over the EC could meet even if not as a formal Council meeting. These meetings were quite separate from the Council of Labor and/or Social Ministers which has been and still is responsible for vocational training: The Ministers of Education met at the "Council of the EC". The first of these meetings, which was held in 1974, took place on the initiative of the former Commissioner, Dahrendorf. The Ministers of Education concentrated on four main areas for their subsequent joint activities:

- the transition of young people from school to work and adult life and their vocational preparation within compulsory education at school;
- equality of opportunities for girls at secondary schools;
- the training and continuing training of the so-called second generation of migrant workers, as foreign employees used to be called at that time; and
- promoting closer European cooperation at higher education level.

In the more narrow field of vocational training, the same period saw the founding in 1975 of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP, with its headquarters in Berlin (West). It has recently been moved to Thessaloniki. This agency is responsible for drawing up relevant documentation, for disseminating information and contributing to a joint vocational training policy by developing cooperation in research, i.e. providing consulting services to governments and supporting Member States in their efforts to develop vocational training systems. In the foundation statutes of the Centre, mention is being made of the need to approximate/harmonize training levels, so that recognition of qualifications can then become a reality.

A whole range of CEDEFOP studies and EC-education and training programs, which had meanwhile been launched, led in the mid-eighties to extensive projects in the field of vocational training: PETRA, FORCE, Eurotecnet, Comett (see list of abbreviations in annex 1) etc. effectively boosted cooperation and innovation in fields such as the training of young people, in-company continuing training, and cooperation between universities and institutes of higher education with trade and industry. These activities and programs did merely promote exchange programs for pupils, trainees, students and teachers and had a certain impact on the debate about standards, although rather short-lived.

In addition to the above-mentioned programs, the decision of the Council on the Comparability of vocational training qualifications among the Member States[5] was passed in 1985 following lengthy preliminary discussions by EC committees and preliminary studies by CEDEFOP. This decision did intend to make a first step on the way to recognizing qualifications for salaried workers too. It was initially limited to the skilled blue and white-collar worker level, and did initiate the setting up an information system to facilitate effective comparisons between training offers in the Member States. Its aim was to promote the mobility of employees for whom the recognition directives did not apply.

This Council decision did introduce a five level training structure ranging from semiskilled workers (level 1) to the professional or university graduate level (level5), while concentrating on the so-called level 2 (skilled blue and white collar worker level)[6].

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[5] Council decision (85/368/EEC) of 16 July 1985 on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community, published in OJEC No. L 199 on 31.7.85

[6] See annex of the Council decision from 1985, op.cit.

CEDEFOP implemented this Council decision on behalf of the Commission and the Member States and did carry out studies; experts including the social partners held discussions on a total of 19 sectors, more than 200 occupations have been retained. These activities had been dealt with and the competent authorities of the Member States had reached agreement on them by the end of 1993. The results had diverse repercussions in the Member States and stimulated important developments in skilled worker training in almost every country. The comparative tables have been published in the Official journal of the EC and the Member States did inform their citizens on the results in order to permit their utilization in a situation of mobility[7].

This system enabled an effective comparison of vocational training qualifications throughout the twelve Member States. It found widespread application as an information system for employees and employers to identify certificates and qualifications from different countries and to establish equivalencies. Even though the results are not legally binding in themselves, interested parties nevertheless had a reference point to assert their right to equal treatment in their occupation, equal pay and career opportunities as foreseen in the free movement regulation of 1968[8], according to which no host country may discriminate against anyone who has undergone his or her school education or vocational training in any other Member State.

Although the Council decision of 1985 was not necessarily intended to harmonize vocational training policies or to bring offers into line with each other, the comparisons did in fact result in a certain trend in this direction: Many Member States drew on these comparative standards and the jointly written job descriptions and structure of training levels when reforming their own vocational training systems and they continue to do so today. Member States with firmly established structures for vocational training such as Denmark and Germany have likewise turned to the results and the discussions held during the comparability exercise when updating their systems. In retrospect one can justifiably say that this work under the overall control of CEDEFOP was anything but unsuccessful, despite the fact that in the area of direct recognition of qualifications only a first step has been made, and others will have to follow.

Heretically, one could maintain that its success in identifying deficiencies in the type and scope of skilled worker training (irrespective of whether we are speaking about initial or continuing vocational training) was precisely one of the reasons why this exercise has so far not been continued or enlarged to cover other levels than the skilled workers' one.

Although the Council decision is still in force and the results are being utilized in a variety of ways to promote skilled worker mobility throughout the EU, the Commission did not propose an extension of the comparability procedure to other levels or continued with the remaining occupations and sectors basically because a number of Member States have expressed political reservations. However, the results produced are in danger of becoming outdated if it is not continuously updated, as was the intention in the decision of the Council and would be necessary in view of the dynamic changes in education/training and jobs.

Furthermore, many of the new Member States and associated countries draw on this system and use the occupational descriptions as reference profiles for adapting their own structures. They are likely to retain their use as a common denominator even if they can not necessarily be considered as fulfilling the function as minimum standards in their current form. In order to do this, the descriptions would have to be far more detailed, outline the required knowledge and competencies in a broader sense in addition to describing the skills needed for the job. Reference to these profiles would be helpful, however, if one wanted to make fast progress at sector level in the debate about European standards. These profiles and the comparative tables could also have been used as reference documents in the debate on social dumping e.g. for building and construction workers.

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[7] See list of sectors in annex 2

[8] Council regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 on freedom of movement for workers within the Community, in OJEC No. L 257 of 19 October 1968 as amended by regulation (EEC) No. 312/76 and regulation (EEC) No. 2434/92.

During this period EC-labor market programs were launched in parallel to the education and vocational training programs. They were called Community Initiatives and were intended to complement the normal Social Fund interventions and prompt innovation and cooperation in the Member States. IRIS, Now, Euroform and Horizon (see list of abbreviations in annex 1) were but a few of the programs designed for special target groups with the aim of improving their situation in the labor market through better vocational training. About 10% of annual Social Fund resources flowed into these innovative target group and partnership programs. Alongside the orientation on new qualifications necessitated by the spread of new communication and information technologies, an orientation on target groups was typical of this phase in the development of a joint (vocational) education and training policy.

An important new stage in the development was the adoption of the Single European Market program and the reform of the treaties in 1987. This also had an impact on development in education and vocational training policies. The Council introduced the principle of qualified majority and strengthened the co-decision rights of the Parliament in the areas that were important for the full establishment of free mobility of goods, services, capital and persons, the so-called four basic freedoms of the EC. The "social dialogue" between employer and employee social partner organizations was likewise institutionalized. A fresh start was made to speed up and make the lengthy recognition procedure more effective. Directives for the general recognition of university qualifications and other vocational qualifications for regulated occupations for which state or state recognized vocational qualifications are indispensable were prepared and adopted in 1989 and mid-1992. Various occupations in the health, educational and legal systems of the Member States come into this category as do social welfare, merchant shipping and other occupations. These directives as well as some of the above-mentioned education and vocational training programmes were passed for the first time by a qualified majority, which because of the complicated weighting of votes de facto corresponds to a two-thirds majority.

In spite of these two major Community instruments ("comparability" and "recognition"), many questions remain open in the implementation practices of the Member States. Open or covert protectionism tends to be the rule rather than the exception and despite the existing unambiguous legal situation, many employees and self-employed have a very hard time asserting their demands for equal rights and treatment. Often, the regional and national authorities who are supposed to be responsible have no clear allocation of competence and are unable to give definitive information. Binding comparative standards similar to those in the comparability system would be of great benefit for applying the recognition directives on regulated occupations. They would help to prevent arbitrary interpretation and relieve those concerned from the obligation of having to furnish proof.

The education and vocational training systems and the bureaucracies seem to resist with all their might any influences in connection with a 'Europeanization' of their structures, as often do the social, labor law and collective agreement reference systems as well. It seems that the more the other policies such as the economic and monetary ones are being harmonized, the more the Member States seek to secure their competitive edge in the remaining areas and seal themselves off from the others. The oft lamented lack of effective comparisons is frequently nothing more than a pretext for legitimizing the restrictive practices of the competent authorities and the social partner organizations in this area. At the same time effective comparisons are often shunned, however.

The social dialogue, which got started in many of these areas in the late 1980s, was not able to help to open the systems either. Although the Social Charter[9] made progress possible in the direction of securing social and vocational training standards, the blocking tactics of certain

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[9] European Commission: Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, Luxembourg 1990; and Agreement on social policy concluded between the Member States of the European Community with the exception of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Nothern Ireland in: Council of the European Community/Commission of the European Communities: Treaty on European Union , Brussels and Luxembourg 1992

Member States[10] prevented effective advances from being made, even though the positions of the social partner organizations had become much closer in many cases. However, the roots of these problems can on the whole be traced to structurally based, persistently too high unemployment in almost all Member States coupled with the ongoing existence of different social and vocational training standards and the resultant protectionism.

Any intervention in vocational training in the course of this phase, and such intervention was mainly founded on social and labor market policy considerations, and the attempt, not necessarily to integrate the systems all together into one and to make them comparable, must be considered more or less as failures. The blame for this must be put not only on the real difficulties which cannot be denied, but also to a great extent on the above-indicated blocking tactics of certain Member States.

Nevertheless the expected rise in mobility going hand in hand with the implementation of the interior market, which in itself would have pushed for the abolishing of barriers to such a mobility, has not been occurred to this extent. Nevertheless it has to be reminded, that mobility problems are equally linked with foreigners which want to reintegrate in their country of origin after having received an education or training in the host country.

4. THE STAGE OF CONVERGENCY: MAASTRICHT AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR A COMMON EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY IN THE EU

The treaty on the formation of a European Union, which was ratified by all Member States in 1993, included educational policy for the first time and redefined competencies for vocational training among other things. If in the past there had been a formally strong competence which for the above reasons was scarcely exercised, it was now cut back on the one hand while extended to education on the other. For both vocational training and education, it was declared that the EU was to have only a predominantly supplementary and supportive role in developing a joint policy and could bring the systems into line in a legal sense only in those areas which were directly connected to free mobility and social standards. Here it is worth noting that the objectives of the Social Charter were in fact confirmed in an additional social protocol and they could also be implemented with a qualified majority (with the exclusion of the United Kingdom, which did not sign the Social Charter at the time either), but they were not included in the Treaty of the European Union. This issue will probably be included in the inter-governmental conference planned for 1996/97.

The new Article 126 on education and Article 127 on vocational training lay down in detail the objectives of the joint policy. The previously launched programmes were grouped together and re-tailored on the basis of these paragraphs. Socrates and Leonardo were started in 1995 in addition to another programme called Youth in Europe.

The White Papers[11] of the European Commission on economic and employment policy and on social policy give top priority to education and vocational training, placing special emphasis on the need for human resources to adapt to technological, structural, social and economic change in view of the internationalization and globalization of the economy and society and the development of the information society. Complementing this, the current Commission published a White Paper entitled "Teaching and Learning, towards the Knowledge-Based Society" which outlines the consequences of these developments on education and training systems and attempts to set priorities for EU policies for the coming years[12]. It places less emphasis on the mutual recognition of what already exists and more on the "validation des aquis" or rather "accreditation of prior learning" or "late qualification", stressing continuing training and on-the-job experience. It also emphasizes core skills and modular development at European level as well as the national level and would like to see recognition ex post or at a later stage as part of a renewal of the systems themselves. Is the Commission (or at least its Directorate General XXII, responsible for education, training and youth) saying goodbye to the immediate establishment of recognition or comparability or transparency of qualifications? Is it ploughing a new field without tilling the old one properly? It seems that the Commission will attack the problem on different fronts. A new start is to be expected in 1997[13].

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[10] It should be affirmed for the reader that normally the 'bigger' Member states have more resistant attitudes towards the establishment of common standards than the 'smaller' ones.

[11] White papers: 1. European Commission: Growth, competitiveness, employment, the challenges and ways forward into the 21st century, Luxembourg 1993, 151 p. 2. European Commission: European Social Policy, a way forward for the Union, Luxembourg 1994, 55.p. 3. European Commission: Teaching and learning: toward the knowledge-based society. White paper on education and training, Luxembourg 1996, 63 p.

[12] See the contribution from Manuela du Bois Raymond

In the meantime the EC or rather the EU has undergone major upheaval through the opening up of Eastern Europe, through its expansion adding three new Member States to its number, through the formation of a European economic area and the association of a number of other countries. The question of whether to deepen and/or expand the EU continues to be a point on the agenda, the introduction of economic and monetary union in the wake of implementing the Maastricht Treaty is high on the priority list in discussions, with education, vocational training and social issues in danger of being pushed into the background again. This means that a joint vocational training policy that deserves the name, and with it the development of minimum criteria and standards, once again run the risk of being put onto the back burner, although they comprise a vital element of the social dimension of the EU and could certainly promote the mutual trust, cooperation and economic and social cohesion of the EU and thus effectively support the implementation of the European Monetary Union. This danger lurks despite the increased awareness of objective necessities and the challenges that lie ahead (see the White Papers quoted in the respective endnote).

So long as no substantial progress is made towards political union and the Member States block each other and retreat into a legal free-for-all, there will be no chance of attaining a joint vocational training policy or laying down common minimum standards, despite the opportunities carved out for this in the Maastricht Treaty and in the additional social protocol in particular.

5. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The following lessons can be learnt:

a) The aim to develop a common reference framework for qualifications and occupational profiles with a promising future will probably be undisputed. What will be disputed is the degree to which they are binding. We are in favor of the principle of the competent authorities in the Member States participating voluntarily, taking the social partner organizations into account. We are likewise in favor of a decentralized decision on whether and to what extent the results are turned into national legislation and collective agreements. The prerequisites need to be improved at EU level so that the expertise, which is frequently available, can also be used effectively and so that the social partner organizations in particular can be included in an appropriate manner in this work. Because of its four-part structure (the social partners, governments and the Commission are represented on its Management Board); CEDEFOP is particularly well-suited for such an endeavor, all the more so since the Centre exercises mere consulting but not executive functions. One would have to or could begin with a few of the sectors or occupational fields which have already been dealt with in the comparability system or in CEDEFOP's work on occupational profiles. This could be followed up by discussions on joint job descriptions, i.e. occupational profiles and competencies (e.g. trade and commerce, tourism and/or construction). The availability of a scheme to analyze and observe occupational and qualification trends would be a must for this in the medium term, however. The research network on trends in occupations and qualification developments[14], set up by CEDEFOP, could be of great assistance in this matter.

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[13] See the recent European Commission's Green paper (1996) on: Education-Training-Research. The obstacles to transnational mobilty, COM(96) 462 final, Brussels 56 p.

[14] This network of researchers has been set up in 1995 called Ciretoq: 'Circle for research cooperation on trends in occupations and qualifications in Europe'

b) The participation of the Member States in such work and parallel endeavors will presumably be possible only on a pure voluntary basis, i.e. the results of the work would not be directly binding so long as they were not be applied by the competent organizations themselves. The Member States and the social partners would continue to be completely autonomous in deciding whether and to what extent they chose to use these results. Given enough effort, we feel certain, however, that most Member States will participate and, depending on current practices, the social partner organizations as well.

c) On the initiative of the Commission and with the support of CEDEFOP, work should begin right now on improving the institutional requirements needed for a regular exchange of information and experience in the area of qualification trends and comparisons:

The work begun on the individual portfolio, on the network of qualifications data banks and on setting up reference centres on the information about and the assessment of foreign qualifications at national or even regional level, which is being pushed ahead from now on as part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme[15], should be given the support of all involved and the results of these projects should be put into practice as fast and effectively as possible.

These pragmatic steps may help to limit the frustration caused by the somewhat moderate progress of the EU in this quite sensitive political area, while paving the way for effective progress beyond what has been achieved so far for the people living in the EU, for its employees and employers. Even if it is not and cannot be the goal to force people into mobility, it is nevertheless quite natural for them to want to have their qualifications assessed fairly, if only to reserve their right to move freely within Europe or merely in a neighboring country and even if they never in fact make use of that right.

Furthermore, with markets coming into line with each other and comparable standards being introduced for products and services, qualification requirements will also be brought into line with each other, whether one wants it or not. This also goes hand in hand with an acceleration in the exchange of information and experience. In contrast to this, there seems to be an increase in the individualization and subdivision or rather decentralization and regionalization of careers, occupational decisions and employment prospects. Bringing qualifications into line with each other for reasons of economic necessity will always be relative and can certainly not be an end in itself unless it is integrated in the development of humane, social and ecological standards, i.e. in the political and cultural development of Europe and more than that (see above). The attractiveness of vocational training and the acquisition of qualifications depends to a great extent on whether they heighten occupational and geographic, in-house and external mobility. The development of reference standards is urgently needed for assessing, validating and accrediting competencies fairly, even and precisely in times of growing disorientation fed by structural changes upsetting the status quo at every level (local, regional, national, European, and international/global).

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[15] Leonardo da Vinci programme: See Council decision 94/819/EC of 6.12.1994

ANNEX 1

List of abbreviations

CEDEFOP: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Comett: Programme on cooperation between universities and enterprises in the field of technology, Community action programme in education and training for technology from 1986 - 1994

EC: European Communities

EEC: European Economic Community

ERASMUS: European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students from 1987 - 1995 (from 1996 onwards integrated in Socrates)

EU: European Union

Euroform: Community initiative concerning new qualifications, new skills and new employment opportunities from 1990 till 1994

Eurotecnet: Community-wide network of demonstration projects in the field of new information technologies and vocational training from 1990 - 1994 (from 1995 onwards integrated into Leonardo)

Force: Community action programme for the development of continuing vocational training from 1991 - 1994 (from 1995 onwards integrated into Leonardo)

Horizon: Community initiative concerning handicapped persons and certain other disadvantaged groups from 1990 - 1994

IRIS: European Network of Training projects for Women from 1988 - 1993 (from 1995 onwards integrated into Leonardo)

LINGUA: Programme to promote foreign language skills in the European Community from 1990 - 1994 (from 1995 onwards integrated in Socrates or respectively in LEONARDO: Action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy from 1995 - 1999

NOW: Community initiative to promote equal opportunities for women in the field of employment and vocational training from 1990 - 1994

PETRA: Action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life from 1988 - 1994 (from 1995 onwards integrated into Leonardo)

TEMPUS: Trans-European mobility scheme for University students from 1990 - (exchanges with Central and Eastern European states)

SOCRATES: Action programme for the implementation of a European Community education policy from 1995 - 1999

Youth for Europe: Action programme promoting the exchange of young people in the European Community

ANNEX 2

Outcome of the Comparability exercise, which has been implemented on behalf of the European Commission by CEDEFOP:

OVERVIEW: Publications on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community in OJEC (Official Journal of the European Communities)

Sector/occupational group	No. of occupations conjointly dealt with at EC level	Published in the OJEC
Hotel and Catering Industry	8	C166 of 3.7.89
Motor vehicle repair	9	C168 of 3.7.89
Construction	13	C292 of 20.11.89
Electrical/ Electronics	10	C321 of 22.12.89
Agriculture	26	C 83 of 2.4.90
Textile/Clothing	9	C253 of 8.10.90
Metal	23	C196 of 25.7.91
Textile Industry	22	C318 of 7.12.91
Commercial Sector	6	C 42 of 17.2.92
Clerical/Administration -Banking and Insurance	6	C108 of 28.4.92
Chemical Industry	7	C262 of 12.10.92
Food Industry	12	C292 of 9.11.92
Tourism	5	C320 of 7.12.92
Transport	9	C338 of 21.12.92
Public Works	11	C 20 of 25.1.93
Iron/Steel	5	C182 of 5.7.93
Leather	12	C223 of 18.8.93
Printing/Media	10	C295 of 30.10.93
Wood	9	C330 of 6.12.93
19 sectors		209 occupations

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